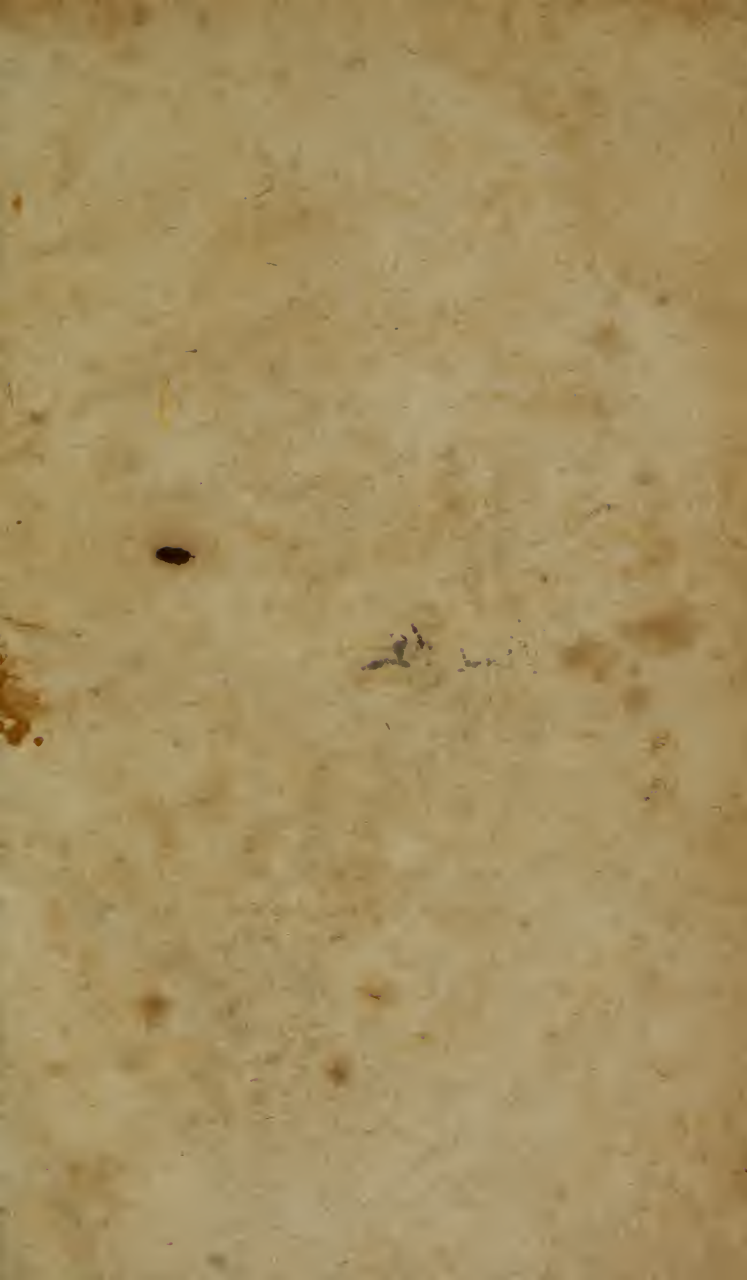




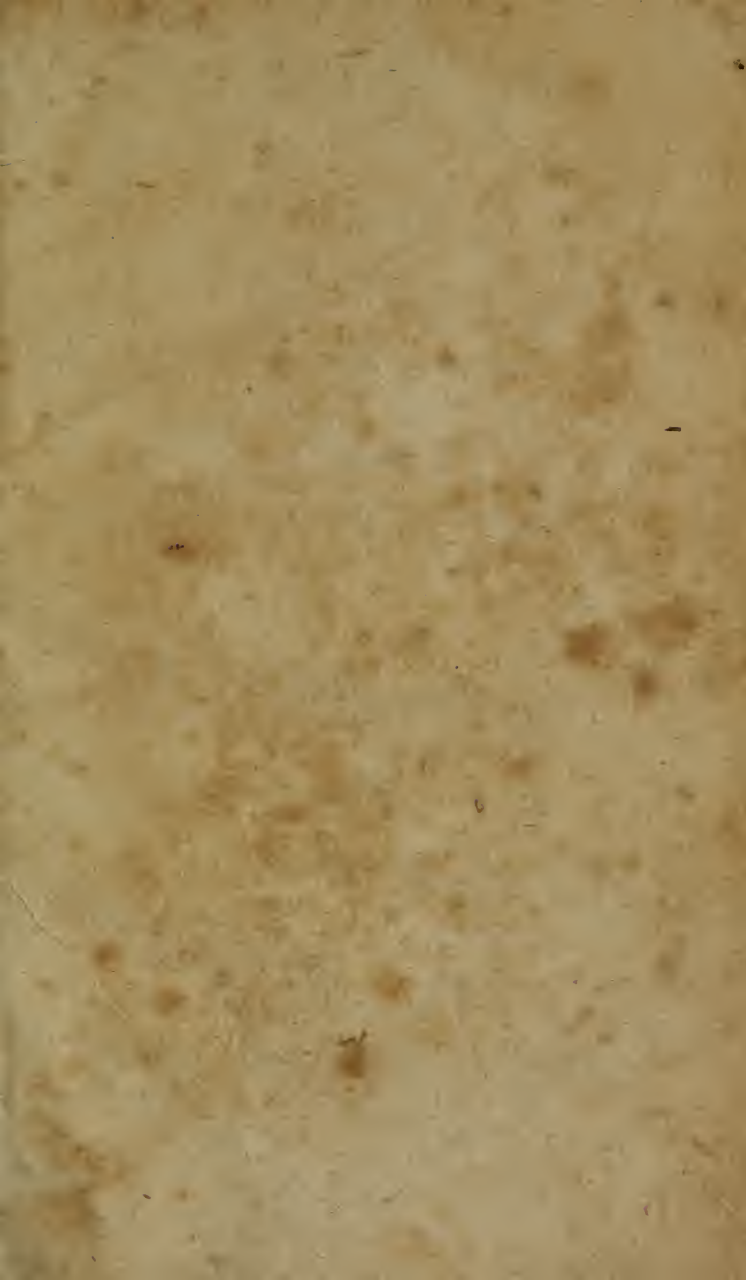
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CLARENTINE;

A NOVEL:

BY MISS BURNEY,

AUTHOR OF

TRAITS OF NATURE, GERALDINE FAUCONBERG, ETC.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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CLARENTINE.

BOOK I.

CHAPTER I.

IN the county of Devon, distant four miles from the nearest town, and surrounded only by woods, and a few thinly-scattered cottages, stood the ancient family mansion of Sir James Delmington, Bart. lately deceased. This habitation, at once gloomy, stately, and extensive, was now the constant residence of Lady Delmington, his widow, her children, an orphan niece, and a considerable establishment of domestics.

Married extremely young, Lady Delmington, though the mother of a large family, was still in the prime of life, handsome, and accomplished. Her birth, though not noble, was respectable; her education had been attended with care; her disposition was benevolent and amiable; and her manners polished, easy, and unaffected.

As her income, since the death of Sir James, had been considerably diminished; and, with a view to the future advantage of her younger children, she

wished to avoid every unnecessary expense, she had, from the moment that event took place, determined upon residing wholly at Delmington House. There, educating her girls entirely at home, upon the most economical, yet rational plan, she lived retired, and almost unknown; contentedly devoting herself to the duties of her situation, and unrepiningly dedicating the best part of her life to solitude, tender maternal cares, vigilant attention, and incessant anxiety.

Her eldest son, Edgar, who inherited his father's title, and his father's excellence of heart and disposition, was at this period about fifteen. To a countenance open, intelligent, and animated, he united a frankness, a generosity of character, and a sweetness of temper, rarely to be surpassed. Though wild, thoughtless, and impetuous, he was never unfeeling, never malevolent or deliberately resentful.—His passions were violent, but by a little management easily curbed; and by a mild remonstrance and supplicating look entirely subdued.

Frederick, the second son, was a year younger, and in every sense of the word merited the appellation of a complete *pickle*;—careless, inattentive, utterly devoid of serious application, all he learnt, he learnt by chance, with the help of quick parts, and a retentive memory. In person he was light and active; in understanding penetrating and acute; to a blunt readiness at *repartee*, that sometimes resembled wit, he added an imagination more than commonly fertile in devising schemes of mischief; and a boldness seldom equalled in putting them in execution.

Hitherto educated at home, by a neighbouring clergyman, Mr. Aukland, under the eye of their mother, the time was now arrived when they were first to emerge into the world, and quit the sheltering roof that had so long been the boundary of all their thoughts—the scene of all their youthful happi-

ness. At the period when this history commences they were upon the point of setting out for Eton, whence, accompanied by Mr. Aukland, they were afterwards to proceed to one of the universities.

On the morning of a beautiful autumnal day, they met by five o'clock in the great breakfast parlour, to wait the arrival of the chaise that was to convey them away. Their mother, dreading by her own to heighten their depression, purposely forbore joining them, though already awake, and listening with fond solicitude to every sound that ascended from below. Their sisters, however, either less deeply affected, or less aware of their own weakness, presently ran down to them, followed by their little cousin, once more to repeat the "farewells" of the preceding night, and to see them depart.

With heavy hearts they now heard the chaise approach. Mr. Aukland, whom it had stopped and called for in its way from Lyston, the market town at which it had been hired, refused to alight; the two boys, therefore, forcing an air of gaiety their hearts were far from feeling, hastily embraced their sisters—looked up with glistening eyes towards their mother's window, and then running down the steps, sprung into the chaise, and in a few moments were out of sight.

The girls, arm in arm, the tears streaming down their cheeks, stood at the threshold of the door, watching the rapid progress of the carriage as it drove down the avenue, till it was not only beyond their view, but even beyond their hearing. Melancholy and silent, they then turned back, sighing to think how many months must elapse before those dear brothers could be restored to their wishes.

Some hours had passed since their departure, and Lady Delmington, with all the tranquillity she could assume, was sitting after dinner at work in her dress-

ing room, when a servant entered to announce the approach of visitors.

Detached from the world as she had long been, and unused to the sight of evening company, this was no very welcome information at a time like the present. It was impossible, however, to be denied—the carriage that was arriving had nearly reached the house, and the children were in sight upon the lawn before it. She gave orders, therefore, to the man to say she was at home, and to come back and inform her who the visitors were before she went down.

Accordingly, in a few minutes he returned to say Mr. Somerset was below.

“Mr. Somerset?” repeated Lady Delmington, “then call Clarentine, and send her into the parlour to me.”

So saying, she hastened down; but on opening the room door, shrunk back a moment from an involuntary emotion of surprise, so little did the person she there beheld resemble him she expected to find. Instead of a man near sixty, feeble and infirm, she saw a young naval officer not more than twenty, whose figure was all elegance, whose countenance was noble and spirited, and whose first address, at once respectful and manly, prepossessed her strongly in his favour.

“I have done myself the honour of waiting upon your Ladyship,” said he, “at the desire of my father, to enquire after the young relation you are so good as to countenance, and so assure her of the pleasure it will give him to hear that she is well and happy.”

“I thank you, Sir, in her name,” answered Lady Delmington, “for the kindness of this visit, and hope in a few minutes to present her to you to repeat those thanks in person.”

She then requested him to be seated, and began some general enquiries after his family.

His answers sensible and polite; the unaffected ease and gentleness of his manners; and the expression of good humour and benevolence that lighted up his countenance, so highly interested Lady Delmington, that she was tempted, more than once, to doubt the possibility of his being the son of a man she had always had reason to consider as his direct opposite in every thing. His mother's virtues, however, recurred to her memory; and in this amiable young man, she rejoiced to behold the worthy successor of so excellent a woman, forgetting whilst she conversed with him the object of his visit, and the delay of her little inmate.

Mr. Somerset, however, at length drew out his watch, and starting at the lateness of the hour, arose with an intention to depart. Lady Delmington pressed him to stay tea; but he assured her it was impossible, as he had a friend waiting for him at Lyston, with whom he was that night to travel several miles further.

"I shall be in your neighbourhood, however," added he, "some weeks, and if your Ladyship will permit me, shall certainly do myself the honour of calling again very soon."

"I earnestly hope you will," cried Lady Delmington, "since, not only the untimely absence of our little Clarentine, but the shortness of this visit, calls loudly upon you for another."

She then rang the bell, and Mr. Somerset's carriage being ready, he bowed, and left the house.

Surprised and concerned at the extraordinary, and now almost alarming disappearance of her ward, Lady Delmington went out on the lawn as soon as her visitor had left her, to enquire of her children, which way they thought it probable she was gone, and how long she had quitted them. To the first of these questions they were unable to give any answer;

to the last, they replied, that neither she nor Emma had been with them for near two hours.

Lady Delmington's uneasiness, increased by this intelligence, now prompted her to send a servant into the village in search of Clarentine; but at the very moment she was giving directions to that effect, one of the little girls came running towards her, to say Mr. Somerset's carriage was coming back again!

At this unexpected return Lady Delmington went out, and waited near the entrance of the hall the approach of the carriage which slowly drove up, and at length stopped. The servant who attended it sprung off his horse, and opening the door, the first object Lady Delmington beheld was the young Clarentine, pale and senseless, supported in the arms of Mr. Somerset.

Terrified beyond all measure, and almost dreading to enquire what had happened, Lady Delmington had scarcely voice to utter an incoherent exclamation, before Mr. Somerset, alighting and lifting Clarentine out of the carriage, carried her himself into the house, and placed her on a sofa in the nearest room.

There, whilst Lady Delmington's woman, who had been summoned, was busied in using every means for her recovery, and the rest of the children were all standing round her, with looks of consternation and dismay, Mr. Somerset gave a brief account of the accident that threw her into that situation.

"I was driving extremely quick through the village, when, from a cottage by the road side, I saw a young person rush forward almost under the horses' feet, and with an agonising shriek call out repeatedly to the driver to stop. Providentially he did so in time to save her; and when I jumped out, I found her stretched upon the ground, grasping firmly with one hand the clothes of a child, to secure whom, it was in all probability, she endangered herself so

much. I raised her up instantly and attempted to comfort and restore her ; but her fright and the fall that succeeded it, had totally deprived her of speech and motion, and had not the child directed me whither to convey her, I should have been compelled to have left her with the people of the cottage."

"That child," cried Lady Delmington, raising her eyes in thankfulness to heaven, "that child was mine—my little Emma ! Where, where is she now, Sir."

"In perfect safety, Madam, with a woman who appeared just as I was coming away, and said she was your Ladyship's housekeeper."

Clarentine at that moment beginning to stir, Lady Delmington's whole attention was directed towards her. In a few moments her recollection seemed to be returning, and looking with surprise around her, like a person just awaking from a heavy stupor, she uttered in a low voice the name of Emma—asked if she was safe ; and, on being answered in the affirmative, fixed her eyes with an air of wild astonishment on young Somerset, and said to her aunt——

"Who is that?"

Somerset smiled ; and Lady Delmington answered——

"An old friend of your's, my love, though a forgotten one ; Mr. William Somerset, your cousin."

"Mr. William Somerset !" repeated Clarentine, a faint glow of pleasure tinging her pale cheeks. "Oh, I ought never to have forgotten *him* ! His former kindness to me——"

"Hush, hush, my dear Clarentine," interrupted young Somerset, affectionately taking her hand, "this is not a time to strain your memory for instances of past friendship ; we shall meet again very soon, I hope ; when, if you are better, we will talk over former days, and renew our early acquaintance. Rest and quiet are, at present, what you most require ;

therefore, adieu—I shall wait upon Lady Delmington on Friday, at furthest.”

Then congratulating her Ladyship upon the happy termination of this alarming event, he once more took leave, and departed.

When he was gone, Clarentine was interrogated by her aunt upon the subject of Emma; and asked how it happened, that, without having obtained permission, she had been so imprudent as to venture out with her so far?

This was a question she found it no difficult matter to answer satisfactorily.—The house-keeper, she said, having told her in the morning that Edgar’s poor old nurse was very ill, she had desired to accompany her on a visit to her cottage as soon as dinner was over. Emma, she added, being with her at that moment, the housekeeper herself had proposed taking her with them; and it was whilst they were walking to the nurse the sound of the carriage first alarmed her, and induced her, on finding Emma had run out into the road, to rush after her in that frantic manner.

This simple recital perfectly satisfied Lady Delmington, who expressed the utmost gratitude to her young ward for the courage and goodness of heart that had made her the means of preserving her helpless little charge.

CHAPTER II.

CLARENTINE Delmington was the daughter of Sir James Delmington’s only brother, who, whilst abroad on his travels, had married a young foreigner of distinction, whose family, one of the proudest in

France, had, on the discovery of the match, utterly renounced her, and thrown her wholly on the mercy of her husband's friends for support and countenance. —Young Delmington's father was still living, and received the first account of this unhappy affair, and of the arrival of his son in England, at the very time he was disposing himself to make his will; and the consequence of this intelligence was, that, in a moment of passion and resentment, he totally disinherited this unfortunate young man, and died shortly afterwards, without either seeing him, or altering his cruel determination.

Pennyless, hopeless, and deprived of every other resource, young Delmington wrote to his brother, Sir James, then in Italy, to state his situation, and implore his counsel and assistance. Before any answer could arrive, however, despair and indigence prompted him, forsaking his wife and infant child, to enlist into the military service of the East India Company, and to embark with the troops that were then setting sail for Bengal.

He had been gone nearly a week; and his ill-fated wife, ignorant of the language of the country, desolate, and, almost reduced to her last guinea, was weeping over her unconscious babe, when a lady in a very elegant carriage stopped at her door, and, without sending up her name, entered the house, and desired to be shewn to Mrs. Delmington's apartment. This friendly visitor was Mrs. Somerset, sister to Sir James and young Delmington, with whose recent embarkation and unhappy story she was already acquainted. To her at his departure, the melancholy wanderer had, by letter, recommended these innocent and pitiable sufferers.

"I am come, Madam," said she, in a voice of the most soothing kindness, as she advanced towards the lovely and astonished stranger, "to take you from

this lonely and melancholy abode, and to offer you every consolation, and perform every service for you in my power. My name," added she, taking her hand, "is Somerset; I am sister to your husband—and already in anticipation sister, and friend to you."

"Ah! Madam," cried the young foreigner, pressing to her bosom the hand that held hers.—"I flattered not myself, with the hopes of exciting this generous sensibility in any English heart—I have forfeited all claim to English kindness!—But this infant," continued she, looking at the child she held in her arms—"this infant may perhaps better merit your goodness; she was born in your land, she is your country-woman, and surely ought not, in justice, to share the punishment due to her mother's errors!"

That mother, not yet eighteen, born to affluence, long inured to splendour, a stranger till now alike to care and adversity, survived but a short time the departure of her husband; she went into a deep decline, and expired some months after in the house, almost in the arms of Mrs. Somerset.

Thus early deprived of both her parents, the little Clarentine was now committed entirely to the protection of her father's family. Mr. Somerset for some time suffered his wife's compassion for her to exert itself without restraint; but shortly growing weary of a preference he felt not himself inclined to bestow; meanly jealous of the attachment his wife and son had conceived for her, he first murmured at, then openly opposed every new act of benevolence Mrs. Somerset's kindness of heart prompted her to perform. Anxious for the fate of her interesting little ward, on the first appearance of this illiberal discontent, Mrs. Somerset applied to Sir James for advice and assistance, and on his return to England, heard with gratitude and delight, that he now meant to take the charge of his niece wholly on himself.

She was accordingly, when just entering her sixth year, removed to Delmington House, and received by Sir James and his wife with equal pity and affection. From that hour she had constantly resided with them, and since the death of her first patroness, Mrs. Somerset, known no other protectors, no other friends.

To save appearances, Mr. Somerset, it is true, had written twice or thrice in the course of seven years to ask after her; he had once even, when on a visit in the same county, honoured her with a personal enquiry; but never had testified the least intention of assuring her a provision, or, wealthy as he was, of participating with the Delmingtons in the expenses of her board and education.

Not so young William; though seven years older than the little Clarentine, and but rarely at home whilst she inhabited his father's house, his mother's expressions of fondness towards her, the solicitude and tenderness with which she always spoke of her, had made a deep and lasting impression on his generous heart. He pitied her for her own, and loved her for the sake of his mother: she had been her favourite, her nursling, the object for many years of all her thoughts; and William, who cherished Mrs. Somerset's memory with enthusiasm, transferred to the child of her adoption a share of that affection, he had, when living, felt for herself.

As often therefore as he had an opportunity he had written to Clarentine, and sent her, in token of his remembrance, such little presents as her age made acceptable, and his finances would allow; and when, after a silence of nine years, the news arrived of the death of her father who was killed in an engagement between the English and Mahrattas, then at war with each other, he dictated to his tutor from a sick bed, and signed afterwards a solemn promise,

by which he bound himself, whenever his age would permit, and he came into possession of the fortune he must one day inherit, to settle upon her an independent competency for life. This paper, drawn up as he hoped with all due formality, and written by a clergyman, the old and faithful friend of his mother, who had seen and often noticed Clarentine in her infancy, he sent to Sir James the moment it was sealed, and from that hour had invariably looked upon as a sacred and irrevocable engagement, which he meant religiously to fulfil.

On receiving this extraordinary deed from a youth not yet seventeen, Sir James was affected by the excellence of disposition it denoted, yet by no means flattered into a hope, that such promises were likely ever to be realised. The dissipation of that world into which his nephew was just entering, the temptations he might have to put his money to less benevolent purposes, or at least, the versatility and various pursuits of his age—all, all, he feared, would contribute to erase from his remembrance this act of youthful generosity; to trust to it therefore as certain, would be cruelty to its object; and Sir James felt too forcibly the helplessness of her situation, to harbour for a moment the idea of consigning her for future support to the emergency of so unstable a dependence.

With so large a family as he had, it was not to be supposed he could do much for her: a limited provision however, nearly equal to what he left his own daughters, he meant to bequeath her, but was taken suddenly ill before he could put this benevolent design in execution, and breathed his last a few days after, leaving her as absolutely dependent upon his wife, as she had been upon him.

From motives of regard to her husband's memory, as well as from ignorance where to place her, Lady

Delmington still continued to take charge of her, and to treat her with undeviating kindness and affection. She was brought up with her own children, more as if born of the same parents than as if stationed amongst them by accidental circumstances, and during the first seven years of her residence with them, scarcely for a moment had had cause to regret her situation.

Since the birth of little Emma, who was now three years old, and the death of Sir James, many of the servants of Delmington House had been discharged. Clarentine then undertook the sole care of Emma, slept with her, drest her, and was her constant companion. Lady Delmington felt the less reluctance to this, as she knew the child was uncommonly fond of her young Governess, and as she perceived, that though of an age, when most girls require constant observance themselves, Clarentine had prudence enough to preserve her little charge from danger, and penetration enough to discover, and check with mildness, all her infantine caprices and follies.

The partiality of Edgar for his little cousin, who had long been his distinguished favourite, made him at first view this new office in the light of a degradation, and he often expressed to his brother his discontent on the subject. Frederick, though far less interested in the cause, for some time joined in declaring the same sentiments, and both conceived a strong, but short-lived aversion to the innocent child. Clarentine, however, at length reasoned them out of this absurd prejudice; protested she had herself solicited the trust, and far from feeling inclined to murmur at, considered it as the only means she had of testifying her gratitude to their mother, for her kindness to herself. This explanation somewhat appeased Edgar, and totally satisfied Frederick; yet as often as they could, they sought to draw her from

the nursery, and engage her to partake in their own amusements. To pacify them, she sometimes complied, though always glad to seize the first opportunity of eluding their vigilance, in order to slip from them.

By degrees, however, their constant readiness to oblige her (and even Frederick loved to oblige her); their good nature in desisting from whatever seemed to give her pain; their warmth in supporting her cause whenever any difference arose between her and their sisters, won her little heart and taught her to prefer their society to almost every other. Not however in their boisterous and turbulent hours did she so much love them, as when sitting on a bench at the end of the garden, with Edgar on one side, and Frederick on the other, she could pore over with them some of the delightful adventures of the *Arabian Nights*; or wonder, laugh, and cry by turns at the miraculous escapes of *Robinson Crusoe*, and the affectionate simplicity of his man *Friday*.

Many also were the opportunities she had of rewarding them for their friendly zeal, on different occasions, in her behalf. If by some wild and boyish trick they had excited Lady Delmington's displeasure, Clarentine apologised, Clarentine pleaded for them, and obtained a quicker pardon; if, after running about the whole afternoon, they returned at evening heated and alarmed, to recount some pickle-exploit, or fearful misadventure, Clarentine hurried them to their room, softened the intelligence in her disclosure of it to their mother, and carried them in secret whatever she could beg from the house-keeper, or save unsuspected from her own supper.

Once, too, poor Edgar had been extremely ill. A fever, the consequence of having over-heated himself, rendered him delirious near a week, and threw him into imminent danger. Clarentine, then about

eleven years old, scarcely left his room a moment, shared in all his mother's fatigue, helped to beguile the long hours of her confinement and attendance ; read, talked to him by his bed side when he got better, and suffered no one but herself to administer to him the medicines that were prescribed ; neither from any one else would Edgar, when sensible, receive them ; and upon no one else would he lean for support, when first beginning slowly to pace his chamber.

Thus, in reciprocal acts of kindness, were spent their earliest years ; and thus began an attachment equally delightful to both parties, equally sincere, and equally undisguised.

CHAPTER III.

THE time of Edgar's absence was to Clarentine the most melancholy she had ever known. She had now no gay and partial companion constantly to partake in her amusements ; to walk out with her after Emma was in bed ; to rejoice with when any particular indulgence was granted her : with Edgar, her chief source of happiness was gone, and all that remained proportionably diminished in value.

Yet Clarentine had a heart disposed to love with fondness all around her. Lady Delmington she honoured and respected like a second mother. Harriet, her eldest daughter, she regarded in the light of a sister, and felt inclined to bestow on her all a sister's tenderness ; but Harriet was unsteady and capricious ; one day mildly affectionate, the next rude and imperious.

Sophia, the second sister, with a heart that did her honour, and a disposition the most friendly and generous, was however so extremely wild and thought-

less, that notwithstanding the warmth and sincerity of her attachment for Clarentine, it was not in her nature to forbear tormenting her four-and-twenty hours together. She had too much of her brother Frederick about her, indeed, to respect *any body* so long except her mother, and even *her*, she often caught herself involuntarily endeavouring to perplex and surprise.

By every other post, letters either from Edgar or Frederick regularly arrived, and lighted up every face at Delmington House with smiles of gladness. Clarentine treasured hers from Edgar even with romantic fondness; read them all till she had learnt them by heart, and valued them above every other thing in her possession.

Meanwhile, Lady Delmington, though she was herself in most respects qualified to educate her daughters, could not but be sensible there were many little elegant accomplishments proper for girls of family, she was by no means adequate to teaching them. Dancing, music, and drawing were of this number; and, as at Lyston, the nearest town, there was a large boarding-school, she soon learnt also there were masters, such as she required, who taught on very reasonable terms. Twice a week, therefore, they were summoned to Delmington House; and Clarentine, though nothing was absolutely paid for instructing her, by being suffered to assist at the lessons, reaped nearly as much benefit from them as the scholars themselves. In dancing and drawing, particularly, she made great progress; but music, though her speaking voice was soft and touching, she soon found would require far more time and application, than she had leisure to bestow upon it. There being but one instrument in the house, and that being almost always in use, she had few or no opportunities of practising; and therefore, as far as related to the scientific part of

the art, in a very short time gave it up wholly : still, however, when alone, or with Emma, for her 'sole auditress,' she delighted to sing in wild and not unpleasing tones the simple ballads that had words she loved.

Every day Lady Delmington, in a large gothic chamber she called the *school-room*, assembled her little family to repeat to her their lessons, receive their tasks for the following morning, read to her, and practise either music or drawing. When this was over she made them sit down to work, and till two o'clock kept them seriously employed. The rest of the day, at least as much of it as they could spare from the business of learning their several lessons for the morrow, was their own, and might be spent in the garden, or the house, as they pleased.

The few families that had visited Lady Delmington since the death of Sir James, chiefly called in of a morning and returned before dinner, as it was well known she had given up all eating company the moment she became a widow. Sometimes, indeed, two or three of her nearest neighbours, during the long evenings of summer came to her to tea. Neither Clarentine, nor her little cousins, however, appeared on these formal occasions for more than a quarter of an hour, during which, they drank their tea standing, eat their dry bread in utter silence, and then, making a profound curtsy, joyfully retired ; Clarentine, to undress her little Emma, the Miss Delmingtons, to their own amusements.

One evening, about a fortnight after the departure of Edgar and Frederick, Lady Delmington received a second visit from Mr. Somerset. He came on horseback, and perceiving, as he approached the house, a group of children walking and conversing together near the avenue, dismounted, and giving his horse to his servant, drew near them. Clarentine in-

stantly recollected him, and running up to him, her eyes sparkling with pleasure, offered to conduct him to her aunt.

Gratified by a reception so cordial, he accepted the proposal, took her by the hand, and walked with her into the hall, followed by the other children.

Lady Delmington, rejoicing again to see him, welcomed him with distinguished politeness; and the evening afterwards turning out extremely rainy, pressed him, with such unfeigned earnestness, to accept a bed at her house, that she soon succeeded in her application, and prevailed upon him to send a note to his friend to inform him of the reason of his stay.

During the following day, the whole of which he spent at Delmington, Clarentine, enchanted with the mixture of vivacity and softness in his character, with the extreme respect he paid to Lady Delmington, the pleasantry with which he treated her children, and, above all, the affectionate interest he seemed to feel for her, never, but when indispensably obliged to it by her attendance on Emma, left the room he sat in. The familiarity with which he addressed her could not have been humiliating, even had she been older; it seemed to be the effect of brotherly kindness and partiality; was never ill-bred, but always gentle, friendly and indulgent.

Lady Delmington beheld with pleasure the regard he shewed her, and hoped much benefit might be derived from it to her young ward. William Somerset, an only son; heir to immense possessions; so nearly allied to her; and with a heart so beneficent and compassionate, could not, she thought, now he beheld her, reflect upon Clarentine's destitute circumstances, without feeling all those noble intentions he had formerly avowed for her revived, in their fullest force. At all events, his countenance and friendship could not but be desirable to her; and as such, was

strengthened to the utmost of her Ladyship's power, by the well merited praises and encomiums she bestowed on the heart and disposition of her niece.

At parting, Mr. Somerset, after taking leave of Clarentine, with a degree of tenderness that deeply touched her, put into her hand five guineas, and promised to send her a watch, and some books he had before mentioned to her, the moment he got to town. She saw him set off with tears——walked with him to the end of the avenue, and when he there mounted his horse, and again bade her farewell, called out to him repeatedly to come again, and followed him with her eyes till he was out of sight.

CHAPTER IV.

THE first year of the two Delmingtons, absence from home was almost expired, and their approaching holidays were drawing near, when, at once to celebrate their return, and the birth-day of her eldest daughter, who had now entered her fourteenth year. Lady Delmington announced her intention of giving a ball to all the little gentry in the neighbourhood. The girls, cheeks glowed at this intelligence; they rapturously embraced their indulgent mother, and springing towards the door, flew up to Clarentine's room to impart to her the transporting tidings.

Faithful to her promise, Lady Delmington, on the second day after her son's return, issued her cards of invitation; gave orders to have the drawing-room prepared, and sent to Lyston to bespeak the best band of music the town would afford.

The happy day at length arrived, and the little family was just sitting down to dinner, every heart beating with expectation of approaching pleasure,

when, with a slow and measured pace, they saw driving up the avenue an old-fashioned post-chaise, attended by a grey-headed footman, who alighted at the hall door, rang, and announced Mrs. Margaret Harrington.

Frederick, on hearing the name, started in an extacy of delight, from his chair, and cutting two or three mad capers, held out his hand to Sophia, who sat next him, and shaking it till he absolutely compelled her to cry out for mercy, eagerly exclaimed—"I give you all joy, good folks! for if the old Lady is not driven to distraction by the news of our intended Ball, my name is not Frederick! She could not have come at a better time!—Lord! how she will rave!"

This idea so fully possessed, and so highly entertained him, that it was with much difficulty his mother could persuade him to be quiet, or prevent his running out himself to announce the news to her unexpected guest.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Margaret, who seemed bent upon putting the whole house into confusion, was issuing forth her commands concerning her baggage at the entrance of the hall, from whence, with the same stately pomposity, she afterwards proceeded to the dining parlour.

Lady Delmington politely advanced towards the door to receive her; there was nothing cordial in her countenance, however, when she addressed her, nothing affectionate in her voice; for Mrs. Margaret had the misfortune of having been, time out of mind, her Ladyship's decided aversion.

To account in some measure for this antipathy, it is necessary to trace a faint sketch of Mrs. Margaret's person and character. She was first cousin to the late Sir James, and at this period considerably turned of fifty.

Tall, thin, and masculine, in height and figure she was truly formidable ! Her face was long and narrow, but composed of features, which though large had once been handsome. Her voice was extremely loud and harsh—her manners blunt, repulsive, and characteristic of the mind within—a mind at once haughty, uncultivated, and filled with prejudices the most vulgar and illiberal.

The marriage of *her* relation, Sir James Delmington, Bart. with the daughter of a needy spendthrift, an untitled Commoner, had excited her ire to a degree almost of madness ! The girl's beauty, she averred, was no excuse ; a thousand beauties cried matches in the streets—sold apples at a stall, yet were not therefore supposed to be qualified to fill a distinguished rank in society. It was setting his brother a pernicious and dangerous example—would bring ruin upon his family, and disgrace upon himself !

Yet this *fair beggar*, this *needy spendthrift's* daughter, had been well received by the rest of her husband's relations ; was known to possess an excellent understanding, uncommon elegance of manners, and a feeling and generous heart. At her father's death also she came into a fortune of ten thousand pounds, though, till after that event, it is true she added nothing to Sir James's income. The asperity and unauthorised resentment shewn by Mrs. Margaret on this occasion was yet more inflamed, on her first hearing of the imprudent connexion Sir James's brother had formed abroad. She imputed it solely to the precedent he had given him —raved publicly against them both ; and for many years avoided all intercourse, as well with Mrs. Somerset as Sir James, because the former had given refuge to her brother's orphan—and the latter dared to be happy with a woman *she* had not selected.

An unsuccessful attempt to get into Parliament at a general election, the close of which saw him entire-

ly thrown out, first prompted Sir James, terrified on account of his children at the temporary derangement of his affairs, to make overtures of reconciliation with the much exasperated Mrs. Harrington. She was rich, had no lineal heirs, and had long declared her irrevocable determination of remaining single for life.

Fortunately for Sir James, Mrs. Margaret's invincible curiosity, united to a love of rambling neither age nor infirmities could conquer, facilitated the endeavours of their mutual friends, and once more brought her to his house. She had never seen Lady Delmington, and, uncharitable as she had been in her censures, longed most ardently to behold her.

Lady Delmington, naturally inclined to satire, by no means favourably prepossessed towards Mrs. Margaret, and at that period young, gay, and inconsiderate, saw her not for the first time, without feeling strongly tempted to retaliate her own ridicule with interest. She compelled herself however, in Sir James's presence, to behave to her with the most exact decorum; but, in his absence, though she never commenced, always readily supported that *aigre-doux* sort of conversation, which two people, hating each other, yet willing to keep up appearances, so well know how to render intelligible and mortifying. Their discourse was profusely intermixed with all those ceremonies and unmeaning phrases, habitual good breeding on one side, and a desire of concealing her secret sentiments on the other, rendered it necessary for them to utter. No opportunity was suffered to escape, after a sentence of more than usual bitterness had been spoken, of begging each other's pardon, and hoping what had been said gave no offence! All which was uttered in a tone of voice, and an expression of countenance so diametrically opposite to the politeness of the words themselves, that neither could for a moment be mistaken as to their real meaning.

Such, during the six weeks of Mrs. Margaret's first visit, was the way in which the two ladies spent their *tete-a-tete* hours: and, such was the increased dislike, not to use a stronger term, with which they parted, that but once had they ever met since.

Lady Delmington, whose character was now mellowed by time, whose spirits were depressed by the cares of so large a family, and who, from regard to the interest of her children, saw the necessity of treating Mrs. Margaret with greater deference, received her, as has already been said, with infinite good breeding, but without any addition of attachment.

Being all seated at table, the sweet and innocent countenance of the young Clarentine placed next her little Emma, attending to, and serving her with the assiduity of a fond mother, attracted the notice, and called forth all the penetrating powers of Mrs. Harrington. She had never seen her since she was a mere child: but now at almost thirteen, tall, light and graceful, with a face in which softness was blended with intelligence, archness with good-humour, and animation with sensibility, she seemed to be an object worthy greater attention. Mrs. Margaret beheld her with involuntary admiration—with mingled distrust and surprise; distrust on account of the danger that might soon accrue to Sir Edgar from a residence with so fascinating a creature, and surprise at the astonishing improvement, she could not but internally allow, a few years had made in her whole appearance.

Dinner over, the children, but in particular Clarentine, who had been cruelly distressed by her unfeeling scrutiny, gladly withdrew to communicate to each other the several opinions they had formed of their new guest.

"Will she stay long with us, Edgar, do you think?" said Sophia. "I am sure I hope not," said her sister.

"You hope not, silly girl?" said Frederick, "why

I expect more amusement in one week, from the disturbance she will create among us, than we could possibly obtain in a month without her. It is reckoned high treason to plague any of you; but I flatter myself, *this* good lady will be left entirely to my management."

"Indeed!" cried Harriet—"Do you think then mamma would have received her so civilly, if she had designed to make her over to you for a plaything, and an amusement?"

Frederick laughed, but made no answer; and after some further conversation on the same subject, they separated—Edgar and his brother to ramble down to the village, and their sisters to dress for the evening.

An hour before the company was expected to arrive, Lady Delmington having some necessary orders to give, apologised to Mrs. Harrington for leaving her, and proposed with a laugh sending for her children to sit with her.

"Aye," cried Mrs. Harrington, "do so."

Accordingly they were summoned, but not being all ready, Clarentine and Harriet went down first.

If in her plain morning frock, Clarentine had excited so much observation, how did she in her present simple, yet elegant dress astonish the already too apprehensive Mrs. Harrington? Confounded and dismayed, she looked at her with so jealous and suspicious an eye, that the timid girl shrunk abashed from the survey, and blushing deeply, with a mixed sensation of resentment and mortification, was precipitately retiring. Mrs. Harrington, however, called her back.—

"Come hither child," said she.

Clarentine slowly and reluctantly advanced—

"Pray are you to dance this evening?"

In a voice scarcely audible, Clarentine answered, yes, she believed so.

"O, you do? and who with, may I ask?"

The severity of tone and aspect with which this question was uttered, so totally disconcerted Clarentine, that trembling almost in tears, she faintly replied, "with my cousin Edgar, Madam."

"With your cousin Edgar?" disdainfully repeated Mrs. Harrington,—“No, no, child, you must not expect it: I shall speak to his mother upon the subject, it shall not be.”

Then perceiving through the transparent muslin of her frock a gold watch, suspended to her side by a very elegant chain, she added,

“How came you by that watch? Who gave it you? *your cousin Edgar?*”

“No, Madam,” answered Clarentine, unable any longer to refrain from tears—“Mr. William Somerset.”

“O, he did? there would be no harm if Mr. William Somerset would do something more useful for you. Such trinkets as these are not at all fitted to your situation.”

At that moment Edgar and Frederick, unconscious of what was passing, entered the room together. The former seeing Clarentine standing before Mrs. Harrington, confused, humbled, her head sunk upon her bosom, her cheek wet with tears, cast a look of indignation at her unmerciful persecutor, and flying up to her, took her hand, and said in a voice of the most affectionate concern—

“What is the matter, my dearest Clarentine? who has distressed you thus? Come, come with me.”

As he spoke he drew her towards the door, and before Mrs. Harrington could oppose it, led her away followed by Frederick, who with a loud laugh, snapping his fingers the moment he got into the hall, exclaimed—

“And this is the old crab we are all to be so civil to, is it? She sets out oddly for one who is to exact such universal reverence!”

"Hush, hush, Frederick, for Heaven sake!" cried the terrified Clarentine—"Suppose she should hear you!"

"O for that matter," answered Frederick, "I should not much care if she did; it would save me the trouble of declaring war against her to her face."

Clarentine, trembling lest this conversation should be overheard, could now be prevailed upon to stay no longer: but hastening through the hall, she was running up stairs, when Edgar following her, begged her to stop and tell him where she was going?

"To my own room," answered she—"I am determined not to come down, nor to see her again this evening."

Edgar in vain besought, entreated her to alter her resolution. She was inflexible; her pride was hurt, and a spirit of obstinacy awakened in her breast that no arguments could subdue. Edgar, therefore, was compelled to give up the attempt, and to suffer her, however reluctantly, to proceed.

The chamber that Clarentine inhabited was situated in a remote part of the house, at the end of a long gallery, that detached it from all the other rooms upon that floor. Just under it was the ball-room; and she had not been seated half an hour, when from below the sound of music ascended through her casements. For a moment she was tempted to forget her anger, and run down; but the words of Mrs. Harrington, her dreadful looks, and the absolute prohibition she had received to dance with the only partner by whom she could have felt any pleasure in being selected; all these circumstances recurring to her memory, she persisted in remaining where she was. Saddened, however, by the gloomy stillness of her own apartment, when compared to the mirth and gaiety that reigned below, she rose with an intention of going into the gallery to call for a light: but before

she reached the door, the housemaid entered with little Emma whom she was coming to put to bed. Clarentine, glad of any thing to do, undertook the office herself; the maid set down the candle and went away.

When the child was undressed, and laid down, all Clarentine's restlessness returned. She endeavoured, however, to amuse herself with a book, but found it impossible. Distant voices, the noise of opening and shutting doors, and above all the cruel sound of the music, perpetually interrupted her. Without well knowing why, she now began to feel something like resentment against Edgar: he ought not, she thought, to have remained so long without again attempting to persuade her down—neither was it kind in his sisters to neglect her so entirely—"I am sure," cried she—"I could not have borne their absence upon such an occasion, with so much indifference!"

Whilst she was thus ineffectually tormenting herself, a light step approaching through the gallery reached her ear. She listened, and presently heard herself called. It was the voice of Sophia, who ignorant of the cause of her seclusion, came to hasten her down.

"Clarentine," cried she, "come and see who is just arrived; you will be so rejoiced! Who do you think it is?"

"Indeed," answered Clarentine rather peevishly—"I shall not attempt to guess—Nobody, I dare say, that takes the least interest in any thing that relates to me."

"O well, if you are so indifferent about the matter, I do not wish to force my intelligence upon you; and so adieu."

Then humming the air of a country dance, she gaily tripped away.

Clarentine, though grateful for this visit, felt but the more irritated against Edgar for his neglect, and

determined, cost her what it would, not to quit her chamber.

Sophia had been gone about ten minutes, when a new step was heard in the gallery ; and the next moment her door was opened by young Somerset!

The book she held dropped from her hand, and she eagerly ran to him.

“Why you poor little solitary creature!” cried he, advancing towards her, “What is the reason you shut yourself up in this strange manner? I won’t suffer it any longer, my Clarentine; you shall go down with me this instant.”

Clarentine smiled ; and glad to be at length overcome, suffered herself without much opposition to be drawn out of the room.

In their way down stairs, he told her he had been in the house about half an hour ; had heard nothing before his arrival of the intended *fete*, but on alighting was extremely surprised to observe the number of carriages and bustle of servants at the door. Lady Delmington, however, when she saw him, had in a moment explained to him the whole business, and conducted him into the ball-room, “where,” continued he, “after remaining some time and not perceiving you, I enquired after you of one of the young ladies, who related to me all that had passed between you and Mrs. Harrington. Determined, notwithstanding, to bring you down, I sent up Sophia to call you ; but as she came back unsuccessful, I ventured to ask the way to your room myself, and was shewn to it by Sir Edgar, who left me at the head of the stairs upon hearing his mother call to him from the hall.”

Clarentine reconciled to herself by this proof of her own importance, enchanted by the kindness of young Somerset, and exhilarated by her nearer approach to the lights and music, entered the ball-room

with glowing cheeks, and eyes that beamed with pleasure.

Her conductor, declaring she should be his partner for the evening, led her towards a set that was forming for country dances, and stationed her next to Harriet, who, as well as her sister, seemed rejoiced to see her, and was lavish in her expressions of disgust towards Mrs. Harrington.

The rest of the evening, Clarentine spent with undisturbed satisfaction. Her considerate partner, who seemed bent upon making her amends for the little mortification she had sustained, by the cheerfulness and good-humour he exerted himself, and infused into all around her, scarcely left her a moment, and evinced so sincere and benevolent a desire of rendering her happy, that her whole heart felt, and gratefully acknowledged the obligation.

Once however, in the course of the evening, her gaiety was for a few moments clouded, by observing a degree of gloom on the brow of Edgar as unusual as it was evident. She was tempted at first to go up to him and enquire the cause, but lost sight of him before she could cross the room, and afterwards saw him no more.

At supper she asked Sophia what was become of him, and learned with great concern that he had complained of not being well, and was gone to bed.

"To tell you the truth," continued Sophia, "I think that was the best place for him; he is so horrid cross, and appeared so discontented with every thing the whole time he staid, that I was vastly glad to see him walk off."

"And I," said Clarentine, smiling—"am vastly glad to hear he was *cross*, as that convinces me he was not ill, since nobody ever bore illness with so much sweetness and patience."

At half past eleven the whole party separated; and soon after twelve, every inhabitant of Delmington House was in bed.

CHAPTER V.

THE next morning, before the rest of the family assembled to breakfast, young Somerset and Clarentine met in the great parlour.

She approached him with the same alacrity, the same smiling countenance she had worn on the preceding evening, and praising him for his early rising, invited him to walk with her in the garden. He agreed to it readily, drew her hand under his arm, and as they proceeded across the lawn said—

“ I wish to have some serious conversation with you, my dear Clarentine ; but may I rely upon your sincerity ? will you speak to me with openness ? consider me as your friend, and disguise nothing from me ? ”

Clarentine, startled at this preface, looked anxiously at him, and half hesitating said—

“ Dear Mr. Somerset, what do you mean ? You really frighten me. ”

“ Believe me, my love, ” cried he, “ that was far from being my intention ; I will ask nothing you ought to conceal—nothing but what it may be for your benefit to disclose. Tell me therefore and tell me truly—are you happy in your present situation ? Are you treated with kindness ? I have important reasons for wishing to know ; and trust me you shall never repent the confidence you place in me. ”

“ Oh ! ” cried Clarentine earnestly, “ you could not have questioned me upon a subject I could more readily have answered ; and I rejoice that you have given me such an opportunity of expressing my gratitude to Lady Delmington, my love for all her family ! Had I been her child, her *only* child, she could not have treated me with more tenderness ; the very servants are taught by her to behave to me with respect and attention, and not a creature in the house

but seems to feel a mixture of pity and affection for me."

The warmth with which she spoke brought a colour into her cheeks, an animation into her countenance, that gave ample testimony to the truth of every word she had uttered. Young Somerset, perfectly convinced, pressed her hand, and said, "Enough, my Clarentine; I am satisfied, and earnestly hope you will never have cause to speak with less enthusiasm; if, however, that should unhappily one day be the case, remember you have in me a friend, whom no time, no circumstances can ever change; one who loves you tenderly, who will act in your behalf with the zeal of a brother, and upon every occasion take the deepest interest in your welfare. Write to me therefore, whenever any difficulty or embarrassment occurs: make me your confidant; trust to me implicitly; and be assured, that whether distant or near you, it shall always be my first study to afford you the best advice and assistance in my power. We are related too closely not to love each other; the same mother cherished, the same house contained, the same kindness fostered us; then, let us not, as we advance in life, neglect to cultivate that affection which sprung up in our infancy, and was beheld with so much pleasure by our mutual benefactress!"

Clarentine, softened even to tears by the kindness of this speech, had no voice to articulate her thanks: she could only express them by her looks, and the fervent gratitude with which she raised the hand of the generous speaker to her lips: Somerset hastily withdrew it.

"This is too much, my Clarentine," cried he, "you owe me nothing, but, on the contrary, will confer a very essential obligation upon me by conforming to the directions I have to give you. Perhaps you wonder at the seriousness with which I have

spoken ; let me explain to you its cause. I am upon the point of leaving you, of leaving England, probably for a considerable time.”—Here Clarentine started, and fixed her fine blue eyes fearfully on his face—Somerset went on—“ In my absence many alterations may take place. You may be distressed, unhappy, and have no one near you to whom you can apply for relief and assistance. Take then this pocket-book, preserve it carefully, and before I go, I will explain myself more fully as to the use to which its contents are meant to be assigned.

Clarentine, deeply affected as she had been before, was now quite overpowered. She sobbed audibly as he put the pocket-book into her hand, and hiding her face, sunk, unable to speak, upon a bench near her. Somerset, at first, endeavoured to compose, and restore her to greater calmness ; but soon finding the attempt vain, he ceased speaking, and in a few minutes left her.

At breakfast, he publicly announced his intended departure ; said his ship was to sail in a short time, and that therefore he must be on board within three days at furthest. Lady Delmington pressed him earnestly to spend those three days at her house ; but he excused himself on account of his father, who would, he added, expect to see him in town before he went. “ I shall be happy, however,” continued he, “ to remain here till to-morrow morning, when, by five o’clock I must be gone.”

Lady Delmington, grateful for this short delay, thanked him for granting it, and soon after retired with her daughters and Clarentine to their usual morning avocations, whilst Mrs. Harrington went out alone to walk.

Frederick during their absence attached himself wholly to young Somerset ; prevailed upon him to enter into a minute detail of his way of life on board

a ship ; asked how long he had been in the service ? who was his captain ? and a multitude of other questions, which, though wearisome to Somerset, he good humouredly answered, frequently laughing at the boy's curiosity, and wondering to what it could possibly tend.

Meanwhile Edgar leaning back in his chair near the window, and pretending to read, neither joined in the conversation, nor appeared at all to hear it. His eyes were occasionally glanced towards young Somerset with an air of sullen discontent, then hastily withdrawn as if fearful of observation ; and at last, suddenly rising, he flung away his book, snatched up his hat, and abruptly quitted the room.

After dinner the whole family walked out ; and Somerset, detaching himself from the rest of the party, engaged Clarentine to accompany him, and renewed the conversation of the morning.

"Since I have the pleasure," said he, "my dear Clarentine, of finding you more in a situation to listen to me than when I last talked with you, suffer me now to enter upon the explanation I promised you. Before my return from sea you will be grown up, you will be of an age to expect that the tranquil and childish pleasures you have hitherto known will be changed for a life of far less serenity, nay, I fear contentment. Should any circumstances then occur to make you reasonably desirous of changing your abode, allow me to advise you in your choice of an asylum, and depend not upon your own judgment wholly in an affair of so much consequence."

Too much confounded to interrupt him, Clarentine listened with an air of profound attention, impatient for what was to follow, and scarcely comprehending what she had heard. Somerset saw her astonishment ; but noticed it not, and thus proceeded.

"Far be it from me unfeelingly to alarm you with distressing predictions ; and still further, by hinting

to you what are my own distant apprehensions, to wish to instil into your mind a restless desire of change, or a jealous petulance and quickness in taking offence, that might involve you in apprehensions and distrust too painful to be supported by yourself, and too injurious to be forgiven by your friends. All I design is to caution you against future possibilities ; and to entreat you never to suffer your spirits to be depressed by imagining that, when an outcast from hence, you have no other eligible place of refuge."

"*An outcast from hence?*" repeated Clarentine, turning pale—"Good God! Mr. Somerset, can *that* ever happen?"

"I hope," answered he, taking her hand, "it never *will*—yet remember, it is not impossible; and even against the most distant casualties, as I said before, it is my wish to warn you. The term *outcast* was perhaps too harsh—my Clarentine can never find hearts hard enough to treat her with such undeserved cruelty. Were Lady Delmington alone in question, I would without hesitation undertake to answer for the continuation of her favour; but her present inmate, Mrs. Harrington, may be less benevolently inclined. She is rich, and therefore will have power—is malevolent, and therefore to be dreaded."

"But why by *me*?" cried the astonished Clarentine—"I mean not, I design not to offend her; then, wherefore should she injure me?"

With equal pity and affection, Somerset, when she paused, looked at her anxious face, sighed, and half overcome by her earnestness, was almost tempted in answer to her enquiries to pronounce the name of *Edgar*! He checked himself, however, in time, and waving the subject, said—

"We may be interrupted; and I have yet much to say to you. You have probably often heard me mention a Clergyman named Lenham, who was my tutor,

and resided at my father's till I determined on my present profession. He now lives in a village near London, called Hampstead, with his wife and two young pupils who have just been sent over from the West Indies. When you was a child he knew and loved you most affectionately; and to this day enquires after you with a degree of interest that plainly shews he still retains the same tenderness and regard for you. To him it is, therefore, my Clarentine, I would have you go, should the face of affairs here ever take the turn I have ventured to hint to you I thought they might. Lady Delmington, when consulted, can never oppose it: she knows too well the excellence and benevolence of his character to apprehend any thing from trusting you to his care. His heart, his house will be alike open to you: and be assured that at all times he will be equally rejoiced to afford you shelter, consolation, and protection. The notes contained in the pocket book I have left in your hands, will be of use in enabling you to prepare for such a journey, as well as in paying whatever expenses you may incur after your removal.

The two Miss Delmingtons, at that moment, approaching and joining them, Somerset gave a different turn to the conversation; and shortly after they all returned to the house.

The impression made upon the mind of Clarentine, by the alarming cautions that had been given her, was deep and painful. Hitherto, without considering its stability, "Content, and careless of tomorrow's fate,"* she had been satisfied to enjoy the advantages of her situation with cheerfulness and gratitude, thoughtless of the future; and delighted with the present. Not such, not equally serene was the picture that had now been traced to her. She distin-

* Thomson.

guished in it, as one of its most prominent features, the horrors of banishment—perhaps of total desertion! Saw herself an alien, without any natural friends and assured support! The idea, to a mind so tender and affectionate, was terrific! It wrung her heart with agony; and when alone, drew tears of the bitterest anguish from her eyes!

“Oh! why,” cried she, “why did he paint to me so horrible a perspective? Who, I exiled from this dear house? I separated from Lady Delmington, from her children, from all I most love, most value upon earth? Would no one plead, no one supplicate for me? Could Edgar, who has so long called me his sister, his friend—could he endure to have his Clarentine so unkindly treated? But alas! what could Edgar do! He is too young to have any authority, any weight; and all I can expect from the opposition he would make, is to be sent away in his absence, never to be heard of, never to be seen by him again?”

This reflection was so afflicting, that she scarcely knew how to support it, and almost hated Mr. Somerset for having started it to her imagination.

When she met him at supper, the redness of her eyes told the effect their late conversation had had upon her. He looked at her with the most benevolent concern, pressed her hand as she seated herself next him, and half repented the distress his well-meant caution had given her. No one else, however, appeared to notice her dejection, the settled gloom and determined silence of Edgar rendering it less conspicuous; and the kindness of Somerset successfully exerting itself to draw off the general attention to foreign subjects.

At an early hour they separated for the night—Somerset, before she went, affectionately embracing Clarentine, and recommending to her in the most earnest manner to write to him as often as it was in her power.

CHAPTER VI.

IT was long before the spirits of Clarentine recovered their usual tone, and an event which happened within a fortnight of young Somerset's departure tended but the more severely to aggravate their depression.

Frederick Delmington, charmed with the manliness of character, the frankness of disposition, so conspicuous in their late guest, felt an invincible desire, by embracing the same profession, to unite his own fate to that of a man, who was so bright an ornament to the way of life he had chosen. Restless, enterprising and dauntless, the vicissitudes of a sailor's career had no terrors for him, but on the contrary, seemed to promise far greater happiness than the sedentary occupations of a scholar, or the inglorious drudgery of a man of business.

After a short deliberation he made known his purpose to his mother, besought her acquiescence to it, and protested that to no other would he now, or ever subscribe. Lady Delmington, equally surprised and displeased at his resolute tone, and firmly persuaded this new passion was but the boyish whim of a moment, coldly but steadily answered, she had other views for him, and consequently requested him to mention his own no more.

Frederick scrupulously obeyed this last injunction, and was silent—but not therefore discomfited. Opposition seemed but the more to stimulate his purpose, and from that hour his imagination was wholly busied in finding means to facilitate its success.

One morning, about a week after, he was missed at the usual hour of breakfast, and though the most distant suspicion of the truth never occurred, diligently, yet vainly sought throughout the whole house. Lady

Delmington concluding he was gone upon some wild expedition to Lyston, soon calmed her mind about him, and gave up all expectation of his return till dinner.

Dinner, however, came—in short, the entire day passed, and still he did not appear. His mother, almost distracted by her apprehensions, despatched all the servants different ways in pursuit of him. Edgar likewise assisted in the search; his sisters, weeping bitterly, terrified each other with the most dreadful conjectures, and the whole house was thrown into alarm and confusion; not a creature in it, Emma excepted, choosing to go to bed, even for an instant, during the night!

Had Lady Delmington been in a state of mind tranquil enough to have attended to her, the remarks and unfeeling sarcasms of Mrs. Harrington on this occasion had alone been sufficient to have disturbed her. With the most inveterate malignity she was perpetually talking of the consequences to be inevitably expected from the unlimited indulgence of parents to their children—of the weakness of supposing that where all command was resigned, authority could be maintained, and of the folly of grieving at that which a little firmness and better regulations might have totally prevented.

Once in the midst of these cruel observations, Lady Delmington gained spirit to interrupt her—

“Oh! Madam,” cried she, “you never were a mother, else you could not, at a time like this, have the courage, the inhumanity, let me rather call it, to wring a mother’s heart by such reproaches!”

“Well, well,” said Mrs. Harrington, “go on as you have begun, continue this absurd forbearance, and depend upon it what you now suffer will be but the commencement of far heavier afflictions. I foresee much mischief from your blind partiality to that insinuating little serpent Clarentine.”

Lady Delmington looked offended and amazed.

"She is preparing eternal regret for you;" continued Mrs. Harrington,—“warming herself into the confidence of your whole family; artfully gaining ground in your hearts; and sooner or later will end, by undermining your peace, and blasting your fairest hopes!”

"Who? Clarentine?" cried the indignant Lady Delmington, "our guileless and innocent Clarentine? How? by what means?"

"By enslaving the affections of your son," abruptly answered Mrs. Harrington, "by exciting and nourishing in his breast a degrading passion, caused by your own imprudence, confirmed by habit, and rendered unconquerable by her seductive wiles!"

"Impossible!" exclaimed Lady Delmington, "Clarentine is a mere child, as void of deceit, as ingenuous and artless, as a new born infant! She cannot at her age have formed so deep-laid a plan; cannot be capable of *seducing* any human being!"

The entrance of one of Lady Delmington's unsuccessful messengers here put an end to the conversation. She could listen to no more, her agony was unspeakable, and she hastily left the room.

The morning came, and brought with it no consolation—no intelligence; but saw the unhappy family in increased affliction—pale, harassed, and hopeless, seated round Lady Delmington, and fearfully listening to every sound—starting at every whisper!

On the evening of the second day of this terrifying suspense, it occurred to the wretched mother for the first time, that her son was perhaps gone to join young Somerset. She remembered his earnest petition to her on that subject: and was yet more confirmed in her suspicions by the account Edgar gave of the conversation Frederick had held with Somerset the day before his departure. This idea was joy, compared

to the horrible uncertainty she had hitherto endured : and she instantly determined to write to Mr. Somerset for confirmation of its truth.

Clarentine, who was present whilst this subject was debated, immediately on hearing her aunt's resolution, drew from her pocket-book young Somerset's address.

"There, my dear Madam," said she, presenting it to Lady Delmington, "there is Mr. Somerset's direction. He left it with me, that whilst he remained in port, I might write to him as often as I chose."

"I am glad to find," said Lady Delmington, "he proposed such a correspondence ; it proves his regard for you, my Clarentine, and you cannot too sedulously cultivate his favour. Do not you think with me, Edgar," added she, turning to her son, who was standing at the window, "it is fortunate for her to have acquired in so near a relation, so partial a friend?"

Edgar changed colour—was silent a moment, and then in a hesitating voice, answered——

"Yes, certainly, I believe so."

"You believe so!" repeated his mother, "My dear boy did you hear what I said?"

"Edgar hears nothing that is said to him now ;" cried Clarentine, "he scarcely answers any body."

"*You* have no reason to complain," cried Edgar, reddening—"I have spoken to you of late, quite as often as you have to *me*."

Then flinging open a glass door that led from the parlour into the garden, he angrily left the room.

Lady Delmington, surprised at the unusual acrimony shewn upon this occasion by her son, now raised her eyes towards Clarentine, and saw with increased astonishment, that hers were filled with tears !

"What am I to believe from all this?" cried she, with some severity—"Have you, Clarentine and Edgar, been quarrelling?"

"Indeed, Madam," answered Clarentine, "we have *not*; it is true Edgar for some time past, has appeared to shun me; nay, he has even appeared desirous to avoid every opportunity of speaking to me; but *why* he should, or *how* I have offended him, believe me, dearest Madam, I know no more than yourself."

"And how long," said Lady Delmington, "has this shyness on his part subsisted?"

"Ever since the night of our ball," answered Clarentine. "I wish, dearest Madam, you would speak to him upon the subject; perhaps he would explain himself to *you*, though he disdains doing it to *me*."

"Well," said Lady Delmington, "do not make yourself uneasy, my Clarentine, I *will* speak to him upon the subject, since between brothers and sisters (and you ought always to consider each other in that light) such causeless reserve and unkindness should never, for a moment, take place."

Clarentine thanked her, and soon after retired: whilst Lady Delmington, but too apprehensive of the justice of Mrs. Harrington's suspicions, with regard to her son, sent immediately for him, in order to begin her interrogation.

With an air of mixed sullenness and melancholy, he obeyed the summons. His mother, struck with secret dread, had scarcely presence of mind sufficient to disguise her alarm—he observed it not, however, and she thus began—

"What is the matter, my dear Edgar? Why are you so thoughtful and grave?"

Edgar endeavoured to assume a more unconcerned look; and answered with affected carelessness, he did not know.

"You are a silly boy," resumed Lady Delmington, "to excite so much uneasiness in poor little

Clarentine for nothing. She thinks you are seriously offended with her, yet feels perfectly unconscious of ever having given you cause. I am sure you have too much good sense to be capable of distressing her long by such conduct. What has she done? tell me, my son, and I will try to bring you to an accommodation. It is beneath your age to keep up any thing like an absolute quarrel with her—remember, Edgar, you are sixteen, and she is still a mere child.”

During this speech, Edgar’s countenance underwent a variety of changes, and when his mother paused, he hastily and with much emotion said—

“Clarentine cannot be called such an absolute *child*, I think, with any justice; she is only three years younger than I am.”

“It is very little to the purpose,” cried Lady Delmington, “whether in *your* opinion Clarentine is a child or not; by all reasonable people she will yet be long considered as such; though I own, in the present instance, she has shewn far more understanding than you have done, and therefore less deserves to be treated like one.”

“I don’t perceive the good sense, however,” cried Edgar, with a forced smile, “of complaining to you of what passes between ourselves.”

“You must allow for her age,” again resumed Lady Delmington; “she meant no harm, but merely spoke to me with a view of learning, through my mediation, how she might best appease you.”

“Appease me!” repeated Edgar in a softened voice, “what a word! I have not had any dispute with her—have not *told* her I was angry—then how came she ever to imagine I was so?”

“Perhaps,” said Lady Delmington, smiling, “if you had had a literal quarrel with her, she might have been less hurt, since one of her chief complaints is, that you never speak to her.”

Edgar could not bear an imputation like this. His own pride was wounded in that of Clarentine, and colouring deeply, he replied—

“Good God! Madam—you speak of her as if she was an *idiot*, as well as a *child*.”

“Indeed, Edgar,” cried Lady Delmington; “you mistake me—I think for her time of life she is as sensible as one can reasonably expect: all I wish is to persuade you to make proper allowances for her age, and to treat her with less neglect, lest she should be led by your coldness and disregard to imagine you disdain her for her poverty, and wish to give her a disgust to this house.”

“Who, *I*?” cried Edgar, with a look that proved how distant from his heart was such a thought, “*I* disdain her? *I* wish to give her a disgust to this house? Ah! I know not whether I should not conceive a lasting one to it myself, were she ever to quit it!”

Lady Delmington, dismayed at the unrestrained warmth with which this was uttered, could with difficulty dissemble her displeasure. She sat some time meditating upon what she had heard; and at length, with as much calmness as she could command, said—

“At present I see no probability of her being separated from us; yet I am by no means certain I shall always have it in my power to retain her with me. It will give me great concern to part with her, let the day be as distant as it may; but still, should any eligible situation offer for her when she is a little older, I should think myself her enemy not to accept it.”

Edgar, petrified by the whole tenor of this speech—a speech so cold, so unlike every other his mother had ever uttered concerning Clarentine, felt himself for a moment deprived of all power to answer it. Soon, however, recovering (his apprehensions for Clarentine made him bold), with respect, yet with firmness and courage, he said—

"It appears so evident, that no situation *can* be eligible for her that removes her from beneath your roof, that I am far from believing it possible you should ever place her under any other; the orphan daughter of my father's only brother must always be secure of an asylum with his children; they are bound, in honour to his memory, for ever to protect and cherish her."

"They are so, Edgar," replied his mother, "as long as that daughter *requires* such protection; but Clarentine is not now so wholly destitute of other friends as she was at her father's death. William Somerset," added she, stedfastly regarding her son whilst she spoke, "seems not only willing, but anxious to serve her. He loves her affectionately—will have much at his disposal—is generous and friendly, and therefore it would certainly be injuring her very essentially to oppose any plan he might propose for her advantage."

Edgar casting down his eyes, and at once losing all that steadiness of look and voice he had just before assumed, sighed deeply, and answered—

"If Clarentine prefers Mr. Somerset's protection, values more highly his friendship than ours, it would, I allow, be cruel to withhold her from it. I could not, however, have imagined that she would so easily have learnt to forget us. She has (comparatively, at least) known this Somerset so short a time—has hitherto appeared to love us all so much!"

"Your surprise at this sudden attachment," said Lady Delmington, "would cease, my son, were you to consider the extreme versatility of childrens' dispositions; whoever last shews them most kindness; whoever, by greater attention than usual, flatters their little vanity, is sure of becoming an exclusive favourite. Clarentine is tender and open-hearted—susceptible of the sincerest gratitude, gentle, sensible,

and good ; but Clarentine is no prodigy. She has her failings as well as other folks of her age, and perhaps at this moment prefers young Somerset to every other friend ; it is very probable, however, that in another fortnight she may forget him, and attach herself again to us."

Then rising to leave the room, Lady Delmington said she had letters to write, and begged not to be disturbed till supper.

The cruel policy of his mother's artful insinuations left on the mind of Edgar a depression he knew not how to conquer. All she had said at the beginning of their conversation had but slightly affected him, compared to the real misery its conclusion had inflicted. Clarentine void of natural affection, wavering, unsteady, capricious in her attachments ! Clarentine capable for a moment of forgetting a family she had so long resided with, of preferring to that family a man, whom so many years absence had rendered almost a stranger to her !—Oh ! there was something in the idea so oppressive to his heart, that, for a time, it drove all other reflections from his mind, and filled him with the deepest sadness and regret ! Pride, jealousy, and resentment, however soon came to his relief, and gave him strength to conceal his inward sufferings, and to determine, during the remainder of his stay at home, sedulously to avoid her.

Clarentine, hoping much from the interference of Lady Delmington, was most grievously disappointed when she observed the increased coldness and neglect with which Edgar treated her after their conference—ascribing a part of his taciturnity and gloom, however, to his anxiety respecting Frederick, she forbore uttering any complaint, or seeking any explanation, quietly waiting till he should himself solicit one.

But Edgar was too indignant even to wish for any ;

and soon convinced her that, whatever might be his uneasiness concerning his brother, it was but the secondary cause of the change she so much lamented. The words of young Somerset on this painful discovery again occurred to her. "If this indifference in Edgar," cried she, "should prove but the beginning of that general desertion he taught me to expect—if the loss of his affection should be but the forerunner of my total renunciation by the rest of his family! What is to become of me? How am I to support their unkindness? How have I deserved it? Oh! preserve me, heaven! from ever living to see the day which is to alienate me so cruelly from the hearts of those whose happiness I would purchase at the price of my own!"

CHAPTER VII.

FREDERICK had been gone a week, when Lady Delmington received the following letter from young Somerset in answer to the enquiries she had made relating to her son:—

TO LADY DELMINGTON.

DEAR MADAM,—“I am deeply concerned that my late visit at your house should have been productive of so much distress and alarm to your whole family; need I add how much pleasure it would give me were I able to send you any certain intelligence of your young fugitive! Hitherto I have had it in my power to obtain no satisfactory information concerning him; yet I have great hopes of soon being more successful. The last time I went on shore, that is to say, yesterday morning, I was told I had been

enquired for repeatedly by a young sailor, who had since had a private conference with our Captain ; no one, however, could inform me where he lodged, or what was his name ; but by the description given me of his person, I could have no doubt of its being your son.

“ In the evening, when I again went on board, I requested the Captain to tell me who the youth was he had discoursed with the preceding day, and what his reasons were for enquiring so anxiously after me. He answered that he knew nothing more of him than what his appearance denoted, which was that of a young adventurer recently eloped from his friends ; that all his business with him was to request he might be taken on board our vessel in any capacity whatever. ‘ The boy,’ continued he, ‘ looks active and spirited, and I own I felt strongly tempted to secure him ; but not knowing what anxiety I might occasion to his family by such a step, I simply told him I should let him know my determination in a few days ; but at that moment could give him no positive answer.’

“ I then asked where this interview had taken place, and where they were to meet again ? He named one of the principal inns on shore, and thither, at the appointed time, I am to carry the Captain’s answer.

“ If the youth in question, Madam, should prove to be your son, you may depend upon my exerting all my influence over him in order to induce him to return to you immediately. I will write again the moment I have seen him, to acquaint you with my success.

“ I beg to be remembered to Sir Edgar, and the young ladies ; and with kindest love to Clarentine, remain, dear Madam, with great respect and regard, your Ladyship’s most obedient humble servant,

“ WILLIAM SOMERSET.”

After reading this letter, it seemed so evident to
VOL. I. E

Lady Delmington that any farther opposition to her son's wishes would but drive him to extremities, and induce him at any risk to engage with some other Captain less scrupulous than Somerset's, that she instantly determined to write again to the latter, granting Frederick full permission to go on board, recommending him to his care, and intreating him to become her agent, and provide for her son every thing necessary for the voyage.

Clarentine wrote a short letter to Somerset at the same time, and both were immediately sent off.

By return of post, Somerset's answer arrived:—

TO LADY DELMINGTON.

“DEAR MADAM—The receipt of your Ladyship's last letter gave me inexpressible satisfaction. I had seen your son in the morning, and had ineffectually attempted to reason him from his purposed enterprise; he was immoveable in adhering to it, assured me, that if I opposed his admission into my own ship, he would apply to the officers of some other; and, in short, was unalterably determined, neither to return home nor abandon his original design. We parted in consequence of this unavailing contention, mutually discontented with each other; but with a promise, however, of meeting again the next day.

“Your Ladyship will be curious to learn how, during all the time that preceded his admission on board, he contrived to support himself, to procure a lodging, and other necessities. The following is the account I gathered from him upon the subject.

“When he left Delmington House, which he says was at four o'clock in the morning, he carried with him *half-a-crown* in his purse, two shirts in his pocket, a gold watch, and a pair of silver buckles; the watch he sold as well as the buckles, on the second day of his elopement; and for *both*, got only five guineas. ‘I knew,’ said he, ‘the rogues cheated me,

for I had often heard my mother say the watch, which was the gift of my god-father, was *alone* worth four times that sum : what could I do however ? I wanted the money, and they soon discovered it ; so, for fear they should make a still better bargain with me, and offer me yet less, I was glad to let both watch and buckles go for what they first offered.'

" On his arrival at the port we are now anchored at, he immediately changed his coat and waistcoat for a common sea-boy's jacket and trowsers. The money he brought with him has lasted ever since ; though, I believe, by this time, it is very nearly exhausted.

" The intelligence your Ladyship's second letter enabled me to communicate to him, when next we met, filled him with the most extravagant delight. He was received the same evening on board, and is at this moment writing to his brother at my side.

" Your Ladyship may be perfectly assured, that I shall neglect no means, in my power to render the voyage easy and comfortable to him ; I entreat you therefore to discard all anxiety on his account, and to believe that the same attention I should pay to a brother of my own, I shall always be happy to shew him. We shall equip him immediately with whatever the Captain may think necessary ; and are, *to a man*, extremely rejoiced to have gained so spirited and cheerful a companion.

" I have the honor to be, your Ladyship's most obliged, and very humble servant,

" WILLIAM SOMERSET."

Enclosed was a letter——

TO SIR EDGAR DELMINGTON, BART.

" DEAR EDGAR—I dare not write to my mother, though I long to do it too, to thank her for what Mr. Somerset tells me she says about me in her last letter to him. I suppose you were all famously astonished

when you first discovered I was gone? What did our friend *Crab* say upon the subject? I hope she was in a glorious rage! I am sorry I had not time before I went to give her some little amicable token of remembrance!

"Love to Clarentine and my sisters. Take care of our poney, and believe me, dear Edgar, your affectionate brother,

"FREDERICK DELMINGTON."

"P. S. Mr. Somerset is very kind to me—I knew he would. Our Captain is a good sort of a man enough."

This curious epistle, all fears for the safety of the writer being at an end, amused the little family extremely. Edgar immediately answered it, and Harriet and Sophia each wrote a few words in the cover. Lady Delmington the same day sent off a letter filled with the most grateful acknowledgments to young Somerset, entreating him to transmit to her an exact account of all the expenses that would be incurred for her son, and to let her hear from him as often as possible.

The time was now drawing near for Edgar's departure. Mrs. Harrington was to set off the same morning, and might in some measure be said, by the joy her removal occasioned, to allay the concern felt by the whole family on account of the loss of Edgar.

The day before he set out, Clarentine, of late unusually grave and melancholy, felt still more than ever depressed. He had scarcely spoken to her, with any degree of cordiality, for near a month; and the idea of his leaving home in such a temper of mind, distressed her beyond measure. Determined, however, not to make the first advances, she smothered her concern, and struggled to appear easy and contented.

After supper, and when the whole family had left

the parlour, Clarentine, while she was undressing Emma, who, that night, on account of her brother's departure, had been allowed to sit up an hour or two later than usual, recollected a bird she had left hanging out in his cage, at the school-room window, and as soon as the child was in bed, hastened thither to take it in.

On opening the door her candle blew out, and she expected to have been left in total darkness; but what was her surprise to find Edgar there before her, with a light he had himself brought, standing near a desk arranging some papers!

They both started on perceiving each other; and Clarentine, forgetting her errand, was, for a moment, tempted to turn back; Edgar, however, prevented her, and by asking her in a more friendly accent than she expected, what she came for? brought her to her recollection, and determined her to proceed.

She accordingly went towards the casement, opened it, took in the cage, and after hanging it up in its usual place, was leaving the room in utter silence, when Edgar again stopped her—

“Won't you light your candle, Clarentine,” said he, “before you go?”

“Clarentine turned back, and he brought the light towards her—they then for the first time looked in each other's faces, and Edgar saw that her's was bathed in tears!”

All the tenderest emotions of his heart were awakened at this sight; he took her passive hand, and drawing her gently towards him, said in a voice that was kindness itself—

“Why, my Clarentine, are we no longer the friends we used to be? Why were we going to part with so much coldness?”

“Alas!” cried Clarentine, “I ought to ask that of *you*, Edgar!”

“Well,” cried he, taking the candle from her,

“ come back, and let us have a few minutes conversation.”

As he spoke he led her towards the table, and they both sat down.

The explanation so long, and so vainly desired by Clarentine, then took place ; Edgar communicated to her his fears respecting William Somerset, reminded her of the firmness with which on the night of the ball she had refused to come down till Somerset interfered ; asked her how she could, after engaging herself to dance with *him*, stand up with another the whole evening ? and in short, recapitulated frankly and honestly every circumstance that had given him alarm, and besought her, if she could, at once to exculpate herself.

Clarentine flattered herself this would be no difficult task. Her heart was so pure, her intentions so innocent ; she was so remote from any wish of concealment, or any suspicion of the real nature of Edgar’s jealousy, that, joy to find his late coldness originated not from more serious causes, obliterated the remembrance of all his past injustice. “ My dear Edgar,” cried she, “ you little know my heart, if you imagine, that when I appeared to give way to Mr. Somerset’s solicitations with greater readiness than I did to your’s, I meant to shew him any marked preference, or regard. I consider you *both* as my brothers, my best friends ; but to him, as being my *eldest* brother—as being totally beyond the reach of Mrs. Harrington’s ill-humour, I more quietly submitted, because I foresaw less reason to suppose he could be reproached for the kindness he shewed me. Never, therefore, again, dear Edgar, resent the sisterly affection I feel so much pleasure in letting Mr. Somerset perceive I have for him. He has merited it by so many acts of friendship, by so much benevolence and goodness, that I should hate *myself*, and by no means have a better opinion of *you*, if you

could still love me, were I not at all times, and upon all occasions, to treat him with the attention and gratitude that are his due."

Edgar, incapable of defining the mixed sensation of approbation and envy, excited by this speech, ashamed to suffer the latter to appear, and yet too cruelly oppressed to be capable of giving utterance to the former, hung his head in silent dejection, assented tacitly to the hope she expressed that they were now perfectly reconciled; and the next moment suffered, her after bidding him good-night, with all her wonted cordiality, to quit the room, without attempting to detain her.

The next morning, at six o'clock, he set off, leaving Clarentine, guiltless of a thought to his disadvantage, firmly persuaded that she had succeeded in eradicating from his breast every shadow of animosity, and consequently disposed again to be the gayest and happiest creature in the house.

Lady Delmington, ignorant of the cause of this sudden alteration, attributed it solely to the departure of Edgar, and fondly flattered herself his late coldness to her had effectually damped an attachment she had begun to observe with so much distrust. Pleased with this idea, though by no means desirous their mutual indifference should amount to absolute dislike, she redoubled all her kindness to Clarentine in secret atonement for the wrong she had done her, in seeking to alienate from her the heart of her son.

Mrs. Harrington rejoicing that, at least for the present, all danger was precluded by the temporary separation of the suspected lovers, left Delmington House in a far more tranquil state of mind than she had enjoyed during her whole visit. The family saw her depart with pleasure, and all resumed its former serenity and calmness.

CHAPTER VIII.

NEAR two years had elapsed, unmarked by any striking incident, and undisturbed by any domestic evil. Lady Delmington resigned to the deprivation of her youngest son, felt all her tenderness increased for the eldest, whose early talents, and many excellencies of heart and understanding, seemed to justify her utmost partiality, and to promise the fullest realisation of her most sanguine hopes.

The dissension, however, she had succeeded for a time in exciting between him and Clarentine he had never forgotten, and quick-sighted as to her real motives, had likewise learned, but too well, to understand. He perceived clearly what were her fears, and conscious of their justice, sought by every method in his power to check their progress, and mislead her penetration.

Whenever, in her presence, therefore Clarentine and he were together, he compelled himself to treat her with as much neglect, as when they were alone he evinced attention and kindness ; seldom spoke to her ; never when she was absent spoke of her ; and so completely lulled his mother's apprehensions, that she almost began to wonder how she could ever entertain any.

Clarentine, inexperienced and artless, was long before she observed, and when she did observe, utterly incapable of comprehending the reasons of these sudden vicissitudes of temper. One hour all warmth, all animation, he conversed with an ease, a gaiety that delighted her ; the next, if his mother appeared, he became negligent and careless, absent when spoken to, guarded in his looks, grave, reserved, and spiritless.

Struck at length, by the singularity of this behaviour, Clarentine one day, half laughing, questioned him upon the subject.

"Are you not," said she, "the most capricious of human beings, Edgar?—You are never the same two hours together, but in the midst of the most cheerful conversation often assume, from one minute to another, the most distant and astonishing solemnity I ever beheld. What can be the reason?"

"My dearest Clarentine," answered he, "I do not at present *wish* you to understand the motives of my conduct, innocent and justifiable as they are. This, however, I am anxious you should believe; that I am influenced in what I do neither by *caprice* nor chance, but by reasons the most indispensable. Ask me for no further explanation; but trust to the purity of my intentions, and communicate your surprise upon this subject to no one else."

Towards the latter end of the autumn, Frederick returned to England, and with his friend Somerset, hastened to Delmington House. Their arrival was hailed as a signal for festivity throughout every part of the family; a ball was given on the occasion; a quantity of beer distributed among the servants and neighbouring peasantry; and to complete the general satisfaction, *three entire holydays* granted the children, during which no masters came, no lessons were given, no tasks imposed!

By indulgences such as these, by a reception the most tender and affectionate, and by every amusement it was in her power to procure him, Lady Delmington flattered herself she should wean the heart of her son from a profession he had, so infinitely against her choice, embraced—attach him once again to his native home, and inspire him with a lasting dislike to his late way of life. But this she soon found it was hopeless to expect. The first three or four days of his return elapsed—the first transports excited by the sight of his family abated, he became restless, discontented, and impatient; made eternal comparisons between the languid uniformity of his

present situation, and the spirit, bustle, and animation that reigned on board a man of war; protested he knew not how to employ a single hour of his time; hated the *dead-calm* of every thing around him; and longed for nothing so much as to be restored to his ship, his messmates, and his *forecastle jokes*.

Far different were the sentiments of young Somerset. Though partial to his profession, because well versed in its duties and persuaded of its utility, though full of courage, jealous of the honour of his country, and zealous in its defence in time of actual service, he was yet not so wholly bigotted to the charms of a sailor's life as to be insensible to the pleasure of a temporary change, or incapable of enjoying the elegances of polished society. Naturally fond of literature, and guided in his choice of books by taste and discernment, he loved study, and was indefatigable in the search of knowledge. Whoever would join with him in this pursuit, he sought after, and courted; delighted in social conversation; and never experienced such perfect satisfaction, as when reading some interesting work, by the fire-side on a winter evening, with a cheerful family circle around him. The security he then enjoyed recompensed him "for the dangers he had passed;" and as the loud blasts howled without the house, and he

"Sat at the social fire, and happy heard

"The excluded tempest idly rave along"*

he hugged himself in his present safety; and grieved for all who were exposed to their fury.

At the end of a fortnight, to the deep regret of Frederick, and the general concern of the whole family, he was summoned to town by his father, and obliged to terminate his visit. He took an opportunity, however, before he went, of privately interrogating Clarentine.

* Thomson.

“Have you,” said he, “as much reason to be satisfied with your situation as when I was here last? Does Lady Delmington still continue kind to you? Are her children affectionate! Tell me, my Clarentine; and be not afraid to own to me the truth.”

“Indeed,” said Clarentine, “I have no cause, since I can but repeat what I have already told you; that I am perfectly happy, truly grateful, and desirous of nothing so much as to remain always as I am.”

Then requesting him to wait for her a moment, she went up to her room, and brought down the pocket-book he had two years before given her—

“There,” cried she, presenting it to him, “take that back, Mr. Somerset; I know not exactly its contents, for I never could bring myself, recollecting for what purpose it was bestowed, to look at it without shuddering; but that it is of value I have no doubt. Be that as it will, however, I entreat you will take it back. It would be unpardonable in me to retain it now, convinced as I am, I never shall have occasion to put it to the use intended. I trust implicitly in Lady Delmington’s affection, and think I should be a hateful wretch secretly to hoard with suspicious ingratitude the means of quitting her, at the very time she is most generously loading me with favours, and supporting me by her bounty.”

“Dear, and amiable girl!” cried Somerset, struck with admiration at this disinterested speech—“such perfect confidence in Lady Delmington does honour to your excellent heart, and will, I hope, be nobly rewarded! Still, however, retain the pocket-book, if not for the use originally designed, at least, for any other you may like to put it to.”

They then separated, and the following day Somerset went up to London.

CHAPTER IX.

SOME weeks after, Lady Delmington received a very extraordinary visit from a near neighbour of hers, the Earl of Welwyn, a man of the most respectable character, but of a retired, shy disposition, who, though he had been settled some years in the country, had scarcely visited any other family, or admitted any other guests than herself and her children.

He brought with him his daughter, Lady Julia Leyburne, a very pretty, delicate girl, not yet fifteen. When the first compliments were over, and they had taken their seats, he made known the purport of his visit.

He had a son, he said, who was then at Oxford, in a very declining state of health, owing it was apprehended to the wonderful rapidity of his growth, united to a delicacy of constitution, that rendered it advisable, according to the opinion of the best physicians, to send him, as the winter was approaching, to a warmer climate. Unwilling, at so early an age, to commit him wholly to his own guidance, and not possessing any connexions abroad to whom he could, with implicit confidence, entrust him, his Lordship added, that he was determined to accompany him to Lisbon in person.

“Now, Madam,” continued he, with a good-humoured smile, “while I am performing my duty towards *one* of my children, I leave *another*, who is equally dear to me, unprotected, helpless, and inexperienced. She has no mother, no female relations whose habits and way of life I yet wish her to be inured to, no governess I can wholly confide in, but stands there, a poor deserted little being, dependent upon *your* benevolence for that care and attention her age still demands.”

Lady Delmington looked extremely surprised ; his

Lordship however, without giving her time to speak, went on—

“ I have witnessed the effects, and long secretly applauded the excellence, of your maternal character. As a wife your conduct was exemplary—as a mother it exceeds all praise. Now whether my admiration will appear to your Ladyship of any value, when you hear to how bold a request it prompts me, is yet to be determined ; a higher proof of its sincerity, however, I could not give, and my motive will at all events, with so good a mother, plead my excuse. Your children,” continued he, “ the most lovely, the most promising I ever beheld ; your wise system of domestic education ; your retired manner of living, all conspire to excite in me the most ardent desire, during my uncertain absence, to intrude my daughter into your family. Could you, Lady Delmington, to oblige an anxious father, could you generously undertake such a charge ? Could you, relieving me from the painful necessity of placing her in a school, burden yourself with such an incumbrance a few short months ? She is mild, docile, and tractable ; has been used to proper controul ; is of a very affectionate nature, and would soon learn to love you as her mother, your children as her sisters. What they are taught, I would wish the same masters to continue teaching her ; what rules they are prescribed, I would wish her to follow. Their *school hours*, their *morning tasks*, let her conform to them all. Make her in every respect your own child, and treat her, while she merits it, with the same tenderness a mother feels. Here she stands, look at her well, and let her youth, her innocence, plead for her.”

Lady Delmington, won by the characteristic frankness, the paternal solicitude of this speech, found all her rising objections give way to its blunt, but affecting earnestness. She rose up, and ringing the bell, said, “ Let me at once, my Lord, put an end to your

anxiety on this subject, by assuring you that, feeling myself highly honoured by so distinguished a mark of your good opinion, I most readily accept the precious trust you consign to me, and from this moment look upon your daughter as my established inmate."

"Heaven bless you! dear Madam," cried the enraptured father, seizing her hand, "you have given me new life, given me happiness unspeakable! Julia," continued he, turning to his daughter, "approach and thank your benevolent protectress."

The lovely girl timidly advanced, and stammered out her grateful acknowledgments; whilst Lady Delmington, affectionately embracing her, ordered the servant who now entered to call her children.

In a few moments the door opened, and the Miss Delmingtons, Clarentine, and Frederick, whom curiosity brought with them, entered the room.

Lord Welwyn, taking his daughter by the hand, led her towards them—

"I have brought you," said he, "my dear young ladies, a new sister, a play mate, whom I hope you will love as much as she is already disposed to love you. Your excellent mother has consented to her admission, and in a few days I shall leave her, fearless and happy, among you."

The girls, enchanted by this speech, all gathered round their promised companion, with looks of mixed pleasure and surprise; and whilst each attempted to express in her own way the satisfaction that she felt, Lady Delmington turned to Lord Welwyn, and said,

"When may we flatter ourselves, my Lord, you will permit your daughter to come to us?"

"I cannot part with her," answered he, "till I set out for Oxford, to join my son, which will not be till towards the end of the week."

"On Friday, or Saturday next, then," said Lady Delmington, "we may expect her?"

The last mentioned day being fixed upon, his Lord-

ship soon after, all gratitude and delight, took his leave.

The rapidity with which this arrangement had been made, though upon reflection it appeared to Lady Delmington astonishing, was calculated at the same time to rejoice and flatter her extremely. It evinced in Lord Welwyn such an unbounded reliance in her principles and character—promised such a valuable connexion to her children, and elated her with such hopes of patronage for Frederick, that she was led to hail the past hour as one of the most fortunate of her life. All she feared, and the first idea that started into her mind on hearing the proposal, was, that Lady Julia Leyburne, accustomed from her infancy to so much splendour, and in her father's house to so much affluence, should teach her children to lament their own inferiority, to despise the plain and simple habits they had been brought up in, and to pant after luxuries and indulgences unfit for the mediocrity of their fortunes. This dread, however, was in some measure removed by the unlimited authority Lord Welwyn had given her over his daughter, an authority which, in case of necessity, she was resolutely determined to exert.

A room, the most cheerful and pleasant in the house, was prepared for the expected visitor, and a bed put up in a light closet next it for her maid. No attention was spared in rendering this apartment convenient—and at the appointed time it was ready to receive its destined inhabitant.

Lord Welwyn when the day arrived brought her himself to the house; sat about a quarter of an hour with Lady Delmington to give the servants time to take her things out of the carriage; then tenderly embracing, and recommending her most anxiously to the whole family, he departed, and pursued his road to Oxford.

The first two days of her removal, Lady Julia,

though she appeared perfectly satisfied with her new abode, and extremely thankful for every attention she received, was grave and silent. By degrees, however, her spirits, never very high, regained their usual tone, and if she was not gay, she at least was placid and contented.

Clarentine, who since her explanation with Edgar had been all animation and vivacity—whose disposition, when unclouded by the accidental and temporary distresses inseparable from her situation, was always easy, serene and cheerful; Clarentine saw not without extreme surprise in a young person, within a few months, exactly her own age, so much her superior in birth and expectations, and so lavishly endowed by nature with every charm that could attach and please, such a total indifference to those advantages, and such an incapacity to enjoy them with the spirit and gratitude they ought to inspire. Gentle, tender, and diffident, there was yet a languid supineness about her that rendered her lifeless and insipid. Devoid of that sportive activity, that playful carelessness of temper so natural to youth, she foresaw danger, difficulty, or trouble, in every thing she undertook; hesitated whether to quit her seat, set out on a walk, or run the slightest risk of fatigue, till wearied herself of being solicited, and completely wearisome to every body else—in short, was slow to a degree that was absolutely tormenting in all she did, and quick in nothing but in discovering, or fancying she discovered, coldness in the looks or voice of those she loved. Tears, silent lamentations, sighs, and an air of misery at once the most profound and the most unaccountable, succeeded to these fancied slights: for a time she abandoned herself to the deepest despondency—grieved bitterly over her own fate; and only shook off the gloom that preyed upon her spirits, by efforts the most painful, and struggles the most incessant.

To counterbalance these little foibles, however, which reason and experience it was believed would effectually eradicate, she had many real excellencies, and among the rest, her strong attachment, her veneration for her father was the most conspicuous. Next to him, she soon, as he had predicted, learnt to reverence and love Lady Delmington. For her daughters, Harriet in particular, she felt nothing but indifference: they had not any thing sufficiently striking in their characters to touch a heart so slow to imbibe affection, though so warm, so sincere, so entirely devoted, when once attached. Great, or very amiable qualities could alone excite her attention—animate her into respect—or surprise her into admiration. Lady Delmington appeared to her to possess the former; she therefore obeyed her with deference, and consulted her with humility: Clarentine, she thought, possessed the latter; she therefore loved, courted and distinguished her with unbounded partiality: spent the greatest part of her time in her room, or in walking with her over the grounds: wondered at her constant activity, and almost envied her unobtrusive gaiety.

Clarentine, on her part, interested by the mild virtues of her new friend, yet pitying the listless indolence that so unhappily enfeebled those virtues, endeavoured by every art, every effort, to infuse into her mind greater energy and vigour. Neither gentle remonstrances, example, nor intreaties were left untried; now gaily, now seriously, she reasoned with her upon her total want of firmness, her inattention and spiritless indifference concerning every thing that required real application; and at length awakened her to a sensation bordering upon emulation; succeeded by repeated solicitations in prevailing upon her, rather than be always dependent upon others, sometimes to assist herself; and convinced her of the necessity, if she wished to be happy, of employing her time, if not usefully, at least rationally.

Four months spent in daily observing these lessons put in practice by her young and lovely mistress, had a most astonishing effect upon Lady Julia, and almost completed her reformation. Happier than she had ever been in her life, occupied in acquiring talents, and in obtaining information, her attachment to Clarentine seemed hourly to increase, her own improvement to advance, and her understanding to enlarge.

CHAPTER X.

ABOUT this time Frederick Delmington was summoned to Portsmouth again to embark with his friend Somerset. Rejoiced by such a call, though concerned by the affliction it seemed to give his family, half melancholy and half delighted, he bade adieu to his mother and sisters, forgot not to recommend to them his *poney*, and at an early hour set out on his journey.

He was replaced within a week by his brother, whose holidays were now commenced, and whose return was hailed with the usual satisfaction.

Lady Julia had never seen him, and notwithstanding the praises she had heard bestowed on him, almost dreaded his arrival, so infinitely had she been distressed by Frederick's boisterous gaiety, and so greatly did she apprehend a repetition of the same scenes.

His first appearance however instantly dispelled all her fears, and left her only sensible to feelings of admiration and surprise.

Sir Edgar Delmington, now turned of nineteen, tall, manly, and elegant, united to a face, glowing with sensibility and good-humour, an ease and even dignity of manners and address, rarely, at any age,

to be excelled ; conscious of no superiority, or if conscious, diligent in concealing it, his conversation was as pleasing as his form ; animated without turbulence, sensible without conceit, and gentle without effeminacy.

The little graceful figure of Lady Julia, her soft and interesting countenance, seemed, from the moment of his introduction to her, to charm him extremely. He congratulated his mother upon having obtained such an acquisition to her family, and evidently addressed himself more willingly, and also more frequently to her, than to a mere stranger, he had ever been known to do before.

At dinner, however, the object of his attention was wholly changed. Clarentine, who when he arrived was out with Emma, then first entered the room, her cheeks tinged with the united glow of exercise and pleasure, her fine eyes sparkling with undissembled joy, and her ready hand eagerly extended to welcome home with smiles of cordial satisfaction her long absent favourite. Fortunately for Edgar, Lady Delmington, not yet descended into the dining parlour, escaped being witness to their first meeting ; had she beheld it, his countenance would infallibly have betrayed him, since, most evidently imprinted on it, for a moment, were all the affectionate emotions of his heart, the transport with which he again surveyed her, and the admiration with which he viewed her improvement in beauty and in stature.

The caution, however, he had observed when at home before, he still after this interview resolutely, and as if upon system, adhered to. The presence of Lady Julia facilitated to him the performance of this task, as she and Clarentine were inseparable companions, and therefore effectually relieved him from all apprehension of ever being surprised a moment by his mother alone with the latter.

The walks, the amusements, the conversations of

the two young friends now became more pleasing than ever: Edgar was continually of their parties; divided his attention equally between them, and to all appearance divided likewise his regard.

A melancholy event occurred about this time, which heightened the interest felt by the whole family for their amiable inmate. Accounts arrived from Lord Welwyn of the death of his son at Naples, and Julia, tenderly attached to her brother, heard the intelligence, though communicated in the most cautious manner, with a degree of affliction, that almost overwhelmed her.

Lady Delmington, condemning, as irrational, an excess of sorrow she yet could not but compassionate; and believing that when this first paroxysm of grief was past, the helpless little sufferer would gladly seek a refuge from her own melancholy thoughts in the sympathy of her friends, forbore aggravating her distress, by austere remonstrances, or an unfeeling exertion of her authority, and patiently awaited the moment when resignation would take the place of despair, and her heart would be open to the soothing of kindness, and the voice of consolation.

Clarentine, who in sensibility was Lady Julia's equal, but in understanding infinitely her superior, was too generous to take offence at being for some days, in common with the rest of the family, excluded her apartment; and too affectionate, though in the same circumstances certain she should have shewn more fortitude, to mingle any reproaches with the tears and caresses that attended their first meeting.

A sadness, a dejection she attempted not even to conquer or conceal, now took entire possession of Lady Julia's mind. She fatigued no one with complaints, but her countenance lost all traces of that animation she had been so long acquiring; cheerless, silent, and incapable of exerting the slightest degree of self-controul, she wandered, as Lady Delmington

termed it, with *restless inactivity* about the house, a desolate unsocial being, unfit for conversation, and unwilling to be amused.

Clarentine at length, discouraged from making any further efforts to remove her depression, reluctantly gave up the attempt; watched her with looks of pity wherever she went, but never offered to follow her, and never intruded upon her retirement.

It was now happy for Edgar, that the term of his absence from Eton was again nearly expired. Clarentine left to herself, or only sitting with Emma, was a far more dangerous object, than Clarentine constantly attended by a friend so assiduous as Lady Julia. He dreaded his own want of resolution; feared to betray the emotions of his heart, and living in perpetual restraint, blessed the hour that once more tore him from her.

This was to be the last time of his going to Eton, from whence on the next vacation he was to be entered at Oxford.

Lord Welwyn, in less than six weeks after the news arrived of his son's death, came back to England himself. The first interview between him and Lady Julia was truly affecting, though the father in his grief preserved a manly composure, a firmness, very unlike the boundless sorrow of his weeping daughter.

Desirous of taking her home immediately, yet anxious to spare her the pain of too abrupt a separation from her late companions, he drew her aside, and asked *which* of the Miss Delmingtons she most wished to invite with her to Welwyn park?

Julia, gratefully sensible of this kindness, immediately answered—

“Though I have seemed for some time to neglect and shun her: and though she has cause perhaps to accuse me of want of affection—yet, if I may make a choice, Clarentine, Lady Delmington's niece, is

the one I should fix upon in preference to any of her cousins."

"Enough, my Julia," said her father, "before we go, I will make the proposal."

Accordingly, after dining and spending the greatest part of the evening with Lady Delmington, having ordered his horses to be put to, he said—

"The longer your Ladyship knows me, the more reason you will have, I fear, to accuse me of encroaching upon your indulgence. My daughter, for near three months, habituated to the society of young people of her own age, who without any other company, have it always in their power to form an agreeable and cheerful family circle among themselves, will feel most painfully, I have no doubt, the hardship of a separation, so sudden and so entire, as that she is now about to suffer. The solitude and gloom of a large and almost uninhabited mansion, to her in the present disposition of her mind, must appear dreadful. Might I then, dearest Madam, solicit for her the consolation of having with her, at least during the first week or two of her removal, one of your young folks as a companion? I ask not for either of your daughters, since it might be inconvenient or disagreeable to you to part with them; but, spare me, for the short time I mention, your charming little niece. She looks the picture of innocence, artlessness and good-humour. Her society will by degrees reconcile Julia to her change of abode, and teach her, perhaps, to give less indulgence to her own melancholy reflections."

Lady Delmington fully sensible of the advantages Clarentine might derive from this visit, hesitated not a moment, but instantly sent to bid her prepare for her departure. Julia herself intreated to be the bearer of the message, and at the head of the stairs, meeting Clarentine coming down with little Emma, she stopped her, and affectionately taking her by the hand, said—

"Do you still love me enough, dear Clarentine, to wish to oblige me?"

"Do I?" cried Clarentine, earnestly; "can you doubt it?"

Lady Julia then made her acquainted with what had just passed, and begged her to hasten back to her room to pack up her clothes; at the same time calling for her own maid to assist her.

In a quarter of an hour Clarentine was ready; the carriage came to the door, and Lord Welwyn penetrated with the deepest gratitude towards Lady Delmington, took leave of her and her daughters, and departed with his young companions.

Welwyn park was about seven miles from Delmington House, and before the day shut in, the carriage drove through the great iron gates that led up to the house. Clarentine had yet never seen it; never travelled so far in her life! she gazed around her with astonishment and admiration! the picturesque and extensive park they had driven through, the stately magnificence of the building, the elegance of the decorations within, and the luxuriancy of the prospect without, all contributed to enchant and amaze her!

"Good Heaven!" cried she, addressing Lady Julia, "how unlike this superb house is, to the old and gloomy habitation we have just left! How light, spacious, and lofty are these rooms! How beautiful those immense mirrors! How vivid the glow of these pictures! Oh, what a paradise you have brought me to!"

Lady Julia, surprised, yet pleased at the warmth of her friend's admiration, smiled, and taking her by the hand, conducted her to the upper part of the house to shew her the room she was to sleep in.

"This," said she, throwing open the door of a large bed-chamber, after ascending a noble stair-case, "is my room; if you like to share it with me, dear

Clarentine, you know how happy you will make me ; there is one beyond it, however, equally pleasant, which, if you prefer, shall be immediately prepared for you. Will you come and look at it ?”

“ O no ;” cried Clarentine, shrinking back, “ let me sleep with you in this. I, who have been used to so small a room, and that too, in partnership with my little Emma, should feel quite deserted and comfortless by myself in so large a one as this.”

“ Then,” said Julia, turning back, “ we will go no further. Tea will be ready by this time ; shall we go down ?”

Clarentine consented, and they again joined Lord Welwyn.

In the course of the evening, as his Lordship never left the room, and conversed freely and kindly with his young guest ; he gave her an opportunity, by starting the subject himself, to descant warmly in praise of the family she lived with. At last, Frederick was mentioned, and Lord Welwyn, but imperfectly acquainted with the particulars of his flight, drew from Clarentine a more detailed account of it ! When she paused—

“ In what capacity,” said his Lordship, smiling, “ is this enterprising youth now gone out ?”

“ In that of midshipman, I believe, my Lord,” answered Clarentine.

“ And what is your friend Somerset’s rank ?”

“ That, I understand, of lieutenant, my Lord. He has hopes of promotion on his return home.”

Lord Welwyn then changed the subject.

Clarentine, accustomed to rise almost the first in the house at Delmington, was up and dressed, the morning after her arrival, before six o’clock. Lady Julia was still asleep, and Clarentine, neither perfectly knowing her way about the house, nor being assured that in going down she might not disturb Lord Welwyn, seated herself at a window in the next room

with her drawing materials, till the servants arose, when she determined to find her way out, and wander into the park.

In less than an hour she heard the shutters below stairs unbarred, and on looking out, saw the gardener and his assistants already at work. This gave her courage, and she stepped softly down.

At the foot of the stairs she applied to a maid-servant, who was crossing the hall, for the key of the house door. The woman said it had been unlocked some time. Clarentine waited for no more; but, light and active, sprung forward, and too eager to consider which way she should go, guided her steps as chance directed, towards a beautiful and flourishing plantation to the left of the house.

It was now the beginning of June; the morning was mild, serene and unclouded. Every shrub was in the fullest bloom—every leaf spangled with dew—the air, soft and pure as Clarentine's own heart, gladdened and refreshed her, and infused into her innocent mind the warmest sentiments of gratitude and devotion!

As she pursued her walk, she came to a little winding path that conducted her at length to the palings of the park next the road side. There was a gate at no great distance, which she observed was open; she went towards it; and saw a venerable old man, who was Lord Welwyn's butler, coming out of a miserable cottage on the opposite side of the road, immediately fronting the gate. He seemed surprised when he perceived her; but passed her without speaking, and by the same path which had guided her thither, walked back to the house.

Clarentine, after he was gone, stood some time motionless at the gate, contemplating with sorrowing eyes the wretched habitation before her. If now, on one of the finest days in summer, surrounded with verdure, cheered by the bright rays of a glowing

sun—if *now*, it looked so comfortless and forlorn, what, thought Clarentine sighing, must be its aspect, when the bleak winds of winter, the chilling rains, and foggy atmosphere of a December day, penetrate through its decayed thatch, and damp and moulder its thin tottering walls!

Well might she then, in the words of Shakspeare, have exclaimed—

“ Poor naked wretches, whosoe’er you are,
 “ That bide the pelting of the pitiless storm!
 “ How shall your houseless heads, and unfed sides,
 “ Your loop’d and window’d raggedness, defend you
 “ From seasons such as those?
 “ ————— Take physic, Pomp;
 “ Expose thyself to feel what wretches feel,
 “ Then wilt thou shake thy superflux to them,
 “ And shew the Heavens more just.”

“ Can it be possible,” thought she, “ that Lord Welwyn, a good, a benevolent, and humane man, possessing so much power, and blest with such affluence; should suffer, at his *very gate*, an abode like this—so desolate, so dreary, to fall into ruin, merely from a cruel indifference to the distress of its inhabitants?”

Whilst she was engaged in these reflections, a young woman of a very delicate appearance, slim, perfectly well formed, and dressed in a light-coloured cotton gown, without any thing upon her head but a band of muslin, carelessly tied round her hair, came out of the cottage, with a low wooden stool in her hand, and an embroidering frame under her arm. She placed the stool in the shade before the door; sat down, and taking the frame upon her knees, began to work with great alacrity; at the same moment, singing with a gay and cheerful countenance a well-known French air, Clarentine remembered to have heard William Somerset, in detached parts, often hum about the house.

In a few minutes a very pretty little girl, of about

six years old, followed by a gentleman in a shabby uniform, likewise appeared at the door. The trees that surrounded Clarentine prevented her being perceived, yet allowed her plainly to distinguish every thing that passed. She heard the gentleman, after standing some time before the cottage, looking at the unclouded sky with admiration, turn to his industrious companion, and say to her in French—

“Ma bonne amie, voulez-vous que je vous lise quelque chose pendant que vous travaillez?”

“Oui, je le veut bien;” answered she, “allez chercher les *Lettres Peruviennes*; elles sont sur ma table.”*

In an instant the book was brought. The officer threw himself down upon the grass by the side of the young foreigner, and began reading aloud; whilst the child, leaning against his mother’s shoulder, stood quietly watching the progress of her work,

Clarentine beheld this interesting scene with the tenderest concern and pity. She had heard much of the disastrous effects of the late French Revolution; knew to what direful lengths the cruelty of its promoters had extended; and had often sighed with compassion at the dreadful recital of those calamities many of its innocent victims had suffered, even at the beginning of the disturbances. This was the first time, however, that in her peaceful retirement any of the actual sufferers themselves had appeared; and the impression made upon her by such a sight was therefore proportioned to its novelty. Who the objects were, then, before her, it was impossible to guess; but from their language and manners, it was evident they were people of education and refinement. Clarentine longed to speak to them, to question them, but had not courage; and after remaining to observe

* “My good friend, shall I read to you whilst you work?”

“Yes do; bring hither the Peruvian Letters; they are upon my table.”

them till she dared remain no longer, turned away with reluctance, and walked slowly home.

On entering the house she was informed that Lady Julia was waiting breakfast for her; but that my Lord had already finished his, and was gone out on horseback. Eager to communicate the discovery of the morning, she hastened into the breakfast room, where, alone at an open window, she found Lady Julia reading.

Clarentine immediately began her relation, and gave so animated, yet faithful a detail of all she had seen, that Lady Julia expressed the utmost impatience to hear from the butler what further particulars he might have to recount. Accordingly, she rang the bell and desired he might be called; but was told he had been out the greatest part of the morning, and had not left word whither he was gone.

"Why then, Clarentine," cried Lady Julia, rising as she spoke with uncommon alacrity, "we will walk down to the cottage ourselves, and make acquaintance with these poor foreigners this very morning. Shall you have courage enough when there are *two* of us to venture to speak?"

Clarentine, with great readiness, answered in the affirmative; and Lady Julia tying on her hat took her friend under the arm, and sallied forth without delay.

On their arrival at the little gate opposite the cottage, they perceived that the spot where Clarentine had first discovered the strangers was deserted. The sun, which had now risen to a considerable height, had driven them in; and the two friends, therefore, after crossing the road, were obliged to summon all their resolution, and knock at the cottage door for admittance.

A little girl, about a year older than the one Clarentine had seen in the morning, immediately opened it. The sight of two such entire strangers filled her

with dismay. She almost screamed the instant she beheld them, and ran away with a swiftness which nothing but terror could have lent her.

Upon this, the young female, whom Clarentine supposed to be her mother, started from her seat and sprung forward, anxiously enquiring what was the matter? The unexpected appearance of Lady Julia and Clarentine nearly astonished her as much as it had alarmed the child. She blushed—curtsied very politely—invited them to walk in; and, when they were seated, asked in a hesitating voice, to what cause she was to attribute the honour of such a visit?

Lady Julia, with a delicacy, a cautious fear of offending, that added to the wonted sweetness of her countenance, and gave it an expression of benevolence the most angelic, apologised for the abruptness with which she had ventured to introduce herself; beseeching the young stranger not to impute it to any motives of impertinent curiosity, but solely to the earnest desire she felt, as being her most immediate neighbour, to offer her such comforts or assistance, as the inconvenience of her present situation might render necessary.

The young stranger, penetrated with gratitude for an attention so flattering and unexpected, bowed her thanks, and sighing deep, said, pointing to her children—

“For myself, dear Madam, I require little; *my* wants, I thank Heaven! I have learnt to contract within a very narrow compass; but whilst my children, thus helpless and dependent, lean wholly upon me for support, I feel myself bound to embrace with eagerness any offer which benevolence may dictate towards alleviating their necessities.”

Clarentine, much affected by this speech, touched by the patient humility of the meek sufferer, and the look of anguish with which she regarded her infants whilst acknowledging their distress; now asked

whether she had any other children than the two sweet girls then present?

"I have one more," answered the stranger, "a boy in arms, who is at this time asleep in the next room. I have a brother-in-law with me likewise: but my husband is with General ——'s army, as well as most of my other connexions and friends."

"May we ask, Madam," said Lady Julia, "how long have you been in this part of the country?"

"About ten days. I was led thither by the hope of finding the necessaries of life cheaper than in the capital; and also with a view of benefit to my brother, who is much out of health, and with whom the air of London disagreed extremely."

"I fear you have yet made no acquaintance here?"

"Helas! Mademoiselle," said the stranger, mournfully—"Est ce dans une position comme la mienne qu'on fait des connoissances? Je sens bien que le malheur n'est pas en droit de si attendre!"*

"I am grieved to hear you think so;"—cried Lady Julia—"We had flattered ourselves it might have been in our power to have inspired you with better hopes; since it is our most ardent wish to serve you, and to obtain your confidence and good opinion."

The unhappy foreigner, overcome by the kindness of this speech, burst into tears, and pressing Lady Julia's hand to her bosom with a look of sensibility the most impassioned, sobbed out, in broken and scarcely intelligible sentences, the grateful effusions of her heart—

"Ange du ciel!" exclaimed she—"Quel être bien-faisant et généreux, a pu vous conduire dans cette triste demeure? Si jeune encore, est-il possible qu'on puisse avoir autant de prévenance, de bonté, de deli-

* "Alas! Madam, is it in such a situation as mine I can hope to form any new acquaintance? I am sensible it is not misfortune that can give me a right to expect it!"

catesse? Ah! dite moi—qui êtes-vous? d’ou venez vous?”*

“My name,” answered Lady Julia, “is Leyburne. I live at the great house, (chateau) you see yonder behind that plantation. Who *you* are, I venture not to enquire: but of this be assured—you have a friend in me the most sincere, the most deeply interested in all your concerns.”

“Your name is Leyburne?” cried the young stranger with a look of surprise—“You live at the great house I have so often beheld with a wish to know its owners? Ah! you have then beneath your roof an inhabitant, whose virtues, whose excellence you dream not of! Bertrand, an old domestic in your family, who, in happier times served my father abroad, in grateful remembrance of what he owed his former master, has succoured, assisted, and befriended me and mine, from the hour of our arrival, with a zeal and activity that does honour to his heart! He brings me daily such little presents as his circumstances and situation will permit—provides proper nourishment for my children,—loves them, cherishes them—and in short, has hitherto been our only support and comforter!”

Lady Julia and Clarentine during this recital felt their eyes fill with tears. They both in the same breath exclaimed, the instant the stranger paused—

“Worthy, excellent old Bertrand! How I shall love him from this moment! But tell me, dear Madam,” continued Lady Julia, “did he ever talk to you of my father?—of me?”

“Yes, often. He represented you to me, such as I find you—amiable, gentle, kind! And your father, he said, was the best, the first of human beings!”

* “Angel of Heaven! What being, beneficent, and good, can have conducted you to this wretched abode? Is it possible that, young as you are, you should already possess so much delicacy, so much tenderness? Ah! tell me, who are you? Whence do you come?”

“ Ah! believe me,” cried Lady Julia, with warmth, “ when you know him, when you see him, you will find all that Bertrand said was nothing more than strict justice !”

She then rose to take leave, when the young foreigner eagerly seizing her hand, and that of Clarentine, who at the same moment approached her, joined them in her own, and with the most affecting earnestness exclaimed—

“ Adieu, amiables et douces amies ! Soyez toujours unies, toujours compagnes ! et fasse le ciel, que possédant les mêmes vertus, vous jouissiez du même bonheur !”*

Unable to speak, the two friends could only press with silent emotion the hand that held theirs, and hurry out of the cottage.

CHAPTER XI.

LADY Julia's first care on entering the house was to send for the old butler. He came the instant he was summoned, anxious to apologise for his absence in the morning, and to learn how he could be useful to his young mistress.

Lady Julia, into whom the benevolent sensations awakened by all that had passed, seemed to have infused a spirit, an energy unknown to her before, ran to him the moment he appeared, and taking his hand, said—

“ My kind, and honest Bertrand ! you must teach me to become good and generous like you ! I have heard *such* stories of you as have won my very heart ! Oh ! why did I not sooner hear how I might assist you in all you did ?”

* “ Adieu, sweet, and amiable friends ! May you always love, always accompany each other ! And may it please Heaven that, possessing the same virtues, you may enjoy the same felicity.”

Bertrand, who although he had lived 15 years in England, possessed every merit to a higher degree of perfection than that of talking or even understanding the language of the country, looked aghast at this speech, and with an air of astonishment the most profound, said, in a mixed dialect, half French, half English—

“What, *pour l’amour de Dieu* ! you talk about my dear young Lady? I not *comprend* von vord dat you say !”

Lady Julia then, in French, explained to him more methodically her meaning ; told him where she had been ; what she had heard concerning him ; and finally besought him to inform her of all the particulars he was acquainted with relating to her new friend.

“*Ah ! Pardi !* I know vat you say ver vell now !” cried the delighted Bertrand, recovering from his late amazement—“You talk of von poor lady at the *chaumière* ? *Bon !* I understand ver vell. *Qu’en faut il dire ?*”*

“Nay, Bertrand,” answered Lady Julia—“You know best what you can say of her ! You are acquainted with her name and family, are you not ? And you likewise must have heard her reasons for coming to England.”

“*Surement*, I have heard them ! Ah ! poor lady ! I knew her in her own country, when she was *pas plus haute que mon pouce* :† O, she was pretty, pretty ! and so good ! Her father he was von *grand Seigneur*, and he had but this child !—*c’est-à-dire*, but this von alive. *Eh bien*, as he was always at Versailles, at the Court, he did marry her to von great man also, M. le Comte d’Arzele, who was a *vieux papa* compared to her, for she was but fifteen, and he was forty. *Mais Dame ! malgré* that, she did make von ver good wife—At least, so I always heard, for I left

* “What must I tell you about her?”

† “No higher than my hand.”

Paris when she was only ten years old. *Malheureusement* when *la pauvre France* was turned *sans dessus dessous*, her father, *mon bon vieux maitre*, was in high favour at the court, and *Helas !* died, it was said, of grief, at the beginning of the horrors ! His poor daughter then, with her children, got over to England ; her husband was with the army, her *beau-frere* *se mourant de consommation* ;* *enfin* every thing went so bad, that after staying two or three months in London, *n'ayant presque pas le sous*, she came down here ; where, *un beau matin*, about a week ago I found her out in that miserable *cabane !*"

Here Bertrand paused, shrugged his shoulders with a most piteous look, heaved a deep sigh, and then proceeded thus—

" Mi lor was not come home, when I did first discover her ; *ainsi* I could do but little towards shewing my gratitude to the daughter of my late master : but now dat he is here, and dat you, my good ladi Julie have seen her, I hope her situation will be no longer so *triste*. I did mean this morning to have told all her story to my master ; but before I got back from the cottage he was gone out ; and so, *il faut garder cela pour une autre fois*."†

" But tell me, my good Bertrand," cried Clarentine, " how comes it about, that this unfortunate Madame d'Arzele, whose fate so justly deserves compassion, should, this very morning, soon after you passed me at the park gate, be singing and talking with a cheerfulness that was quite astonishing ?"

" Dame ! c'est qu'elle est naturellement vive, enjoué, solatre ! un rien la fait pleurer, un rien la fait rire. Voiez donc ? Ce n'est pas avec un tel caractere qu'on devient sombre et triste tout de suite ; aussi, soutient-elle ses chagrins avec un courage vraiment etonnant ; travaillant toujours, brodant, faisant

* " Her brother-in-law dying of a consumption."

† " I must reserve it for another time."

de la dentelle—enfin de tout—et chantant, causant, badinant tant qu'elle peut."*

At that moment the entrance of Lord Welwyn put an end to the subject. Bertrand immediately withdrew; but not before he had recommended to Lady Julia by a significant glance, the cause of his ill-fated mistress.

Meanwhile Lord Welwyn, whose mind seemed to be as much pre-occupied as was that of his daughter, seated himself near the window, and after a few moments silence, said :

" I have been engaged in conversation this morning with a person whose discourse has left such an impression of melancholy on my mind, that I feel myself quite oppressed, and saddened."

" Who then, my Lord," said Lady Julia, " was this person?"

" His name," answered her father, " I did not hear; he was a young Frenchman however, and an Emigrant. I met him walking slowly by the roadside, in a narrow lane at the distance of about two miles from hence; he stopped to let my horse go by, and as I passed, looked up at me, and slightly touched his hat. Struck by the dejection and languor visible in his countenance, and by a certain air of distinction observable about him, notwithstanding the meanness of his dress, I returned his bow, and reining in my horse, said something about the fineness of the day, and asked him whether he had walked far that morning? He answered me in French, with great politeness, apologising for not being able to under-

* " Ah, truly! that is because she is naturally spirited, playful, and lively; a mere trifle makes her cry, a trifle makes her laugh! You may well believe, therefore, that with such a disposition, it is not all at once that she can become gloomy and desponding. The fortitude with which she has borne her sorrows has been truly admirable. She works continually; embroiders, makes lace; in short, does any thing; and laughs and sings whenever she can.

stand me. I then addressed him in his own language; and, to be short, we soon entered into closer conversation, during the course of which, I dismounted and sent home the groom with my horse, that I might more conveniently pursue a discourse, which now began to interest me most deeply. What he said of himself was slight; he seemed shy of communicating his own affairs; but gave me, in answer to my interrogatories, such an account of many of the recent transactions abroad, to which he had unhappily been witness, as made my blood run cold. I understand he resides very near us, with his sister-in-law, and her children; and I have given him a pressing invitation to come and see me. His manners are well-bred, but plain, and unaffected; his language perfectly correct; and his countenance sensible, intelligent, and extremely pleasing."

Lady Julia, delighted with this account, and not questioning but it related to the officer Clarentine had seen at the cottage, now began her history, omitting none of the circumstances which she thought most likely to interest her father; and concluding by an earnest petition for leave to look out immediately in the neighbourhood for a more convenient habitation for Madame d'Arzele, and her unfortunate little family.

Lord Welwyn heard her with the profoundest attention, and the most evident satisfaction; applauded her benevolent intentions, and readily promised to assist her liberally in their execution.

Accordingly, the carriage was ordered, and the instant dinner was over Lady Julia, her Governess, and Clarentine, set out on their interesting research.

It had been agreed by the two friends, that a house half-way between Welwyn park and Delmington would, on every account, be preferable as to situation and vicinity, to any other. They therefore gave proper orders to the postillion, and proceeded gently

forward ; gazing with envy at every neat or cheerful habitation they passed, and forming plans of future happiness and comfort for their amiable friend.

At the end of a drive of near four miles, they came to a little village, beautifully situated at the foot of a hill which commanded one of the finest views in nature. Here Lady Julia and her companions stopped ; and, whilst the former sent the servant who had attended them to enquire of some of the inhabitants whether there were any houses near there to be let, got out and walked, ordering the postillion to follow them at a distance.

In a few minutes the servant returned to inform his lady that, about a quarter of a mile further up the hill there was a small house then unoccupied, which the people he had questioned believed was either to be let or sold. Thither accordingly they immediately drove, and soon came to one of the most romantic fairy dwellings imagination can conceive ! It was situated near a little gothic church so entirely surrounded and concealed by trees, that, at any distance, its antique spire alone was to be seen. Before the door was a green slope, shaded by thick branching elms, and encircled by a gravel walk whose borders were planted with flowering shrubs. Behind it was a neat, rustic garden, enclosed by a high hedge, and abundantly supplied with all the common fruit-trees and vegetables that the climate affords. The prospect from the front windows particularly was enchanting ; the furniture in all the rooms clean and good, and, in short, the whole habitation remarkable for its cheerfulness, order, and perfect tranquillity.

Lady Julia, transported with delight, could with difficulty contain her raptures, even before the man who was deputed to conduct them. She acquired sufficient *sang froid* at last, however, to ask the necessary and usual questions concerning rent, taxes, &c. and then, telling him she would send a person

the next day to make some final agreement with him, she reluctantly got into the chaise and drove away.

Nothing could equal the gaiety and animation with which she made the journey home. Benevolence, that purest of all sensations, warms, invigorates, expands the coldest heart! It gives joy and happiness of the most exquisite nature; adds lusture to the eye of youth, bloom to the cheek, smiles of gladness to the countenance; and diffuses serenity, internal satisfaction, and content wherever it takes root.

Lord Welwyn welcomed the fair wanderers, with looks of the most cordial affection; congratulated them upon the success of their expedition; and promised to ride over himself the next morning in order to adjust all pecuniary matters with the proprietors of the house, previous to carrying its destined tenants to survey it.

This point settled, Lady Julia, indefatigable and zealous, sent for the housekeeper to her own room, to consult with her about the domestics, with which it would be proper to furnish the new establishment. After a long conference it was agreed, that one maid would be all that at present could be required, as Madame d'Arzele, according to Bertrand's account, had brought a *Femme-de-Chambre* with her from France, who had followed her to the cottage. This additional servant the house-keeper promised to procure: and Lady Julia undertook to pay.

Clarentine, who in all these arrangements took the strongest interest; who rejoiced to behold her friend thus active in the cause of humanity; and who observed her with wonder and delight, whilst silently planning, or diligently executing fresh acts of kindness; Clarentine, the instant they retired to their room for the night, threw her arms around her, and embracing her tenderly—

“O my dearest Lady Julia!” exclaimed she, “how happy you must at this moment feel! What pleasure

must the recollection of such a day so spent afford you!"

"Ah! believe me, my Clarentine," answered Lady Julia affectionately, "the idea of having merited your praise constitutes the sweetest portion of my felicity! My father too, with what gentleness did he speak to, what kindness look at his happy Julia this whole evening! Oh Clarentine, support, encourage me in the wish of doing good, that I may long continue to deserve two blessings so precious to my heart, as the approbation of such a father, the love of such a friend!"

A few days now sufficed to conclude every preparation necessary to be made before Madame d'Arzele could be put in possession of her charming little abode. Lady Julia anxious to procure her the additional gratification of surprise as well as comfort, resolutely preserved the strictest silence upon the subject, although she saw her every day, and every day gave her fresh instances of an attachment the most flattering and sincere, till the impatiently expected moment arrived, when all things being in readiness, she attended her herself, with her friend Clarentine, to the house.

Madame d'Arzele, believing, according to the account she had heard, that this little mansion belonged to Lord Welwyn, and had merely been fitted up during the summer months to receive a friend he expected from London, appeared enchanted with it, but paid infinitely less attention to the charms of its situation than she would have done, had she been informed of the real truth.

After walking over the garden, visiting the different rooms, and tasting some of the best fruit the former afforded, Madam d'Arzele, somewhat impatient at so long an absence from her little family, gently reminded Lady Julia of the lateness of the hour—

"My dear Madam," said the latter smiling, "you must not grow weary of this place yet, for we mean to dine and spend the day here."

“Spend the day here?” repeated Madame d’Arzele with a look of consternation—“Et mes pauvres enfans—que deviendront-ils si longtems sans leur mere?”*

“Vos enfans, Madame,” answered Lady Julia, enjoying her perplexity—“arriveront dans un moment, et dîneront ici avec nous.”†

Madame d’Arzele, more and more surprised, now gazed by turns at Lady Julia, and Clarentine, with looks of the most earnest curiosity; their countenances, however, though beaming with the purest delight, told her nothing, yet increased her wish to be informed. At length, therefore, taking lady Julia’s hand, and attentively fixing her eyes on her’s—

“Tell me, tell me,” she cried, “what this mysterious silence, these significant looks, this inexplicable delay, tell me what it all means!”

Lady Julia, too generous to keep her longer in suspense, now threw her arms round her, and embracing her affectionately, answered with much emotion: “It means, dearest Madam, that if the situation suit you, and you can pardon a friend for making such an offer, this house and every thing it contains is yours!”

Who can describe the raptures and amazement of the delighted Foreigner? She hung round her lovely benefactress with sensations of gratitude too fervent to be uttered; wept upon her shoulder; called her by every endearing epithet that the most ardent gratitude could dictate; and then, suddenly raising her head, and listening attentively a moment, she sprung to the window exclaiming—“Ah Dieu! voici mes enfans.”‡ and quicker than lightning flew down stairs to meet and welcome them.

* “And what, during so long an absence from their mother, will become of my poor children?”

† “Your children, Madam, will arrive in a moment, they are to dine here with us.”

‡ “Oh Heavens! here are my children.”

In a short time, the children, attended by their French maid, appeared. The two eldest, who had, at length, familiarised themselves to the sight of Lady Julia and her friend, ran to the former the moment they beheld her, to thank her for the charming ride they had had, and to tell her their uncle was coming immediately with Lord Welwyn, who had promised that they should be allowed to dine there.

At these words, their mother seating herself, and calling them both to her, threw an arm round each, and said—

“Eugenie, Pauline,—Regardez toutce-qui vous entoure—cette charmante maison, ce beau jardin, ce coup d’œil délicieux !—Eh bien, voiz à presant votre jeune et genereuse bienfaitrice ! C’est elle qui vous comble de tout ces dons—vous accorde tant ce bonheur a la fois—vous remets en possession de tout ce que vous appercevez ! Que ferez vous, O mes chers enfans pour meriter tant de bienfaits, pour exprimer la reconnoissance que doit vous inspirer un excés de bonté si touchant ? Ah ! tombez a ses pieds, et remerciez-la pour vous, et votre heureuse mere !”*

As she uttered this injunction, the tears, which she vainly had endeavoured to disperse, forced their way in torrents down her cheeks, and compelled her to pause. The children alarmed at this sight, and but imperfectly comprehending the tenor of her speech to them, looked fearfully at Lady Julia and at Clarentine, as if to penetrate the cause of their mother’s apparent grief ; and then throwing themselves into

* Eugenie, Pauline—Look at every thing that surrounds you—this charming house, that delightful garden, that enchanting prospect ! Look now at your young and generous benefactress ! it is she who enriches you with so many gifts, provides for you so many blessings, and puts you in possession of every thing you behold ! What, oh my dearest children ! can you do to merit such liberality ? How express the gratitude you ought to feel for an excess of kindness so affecting ? Oh ! run to her, and kneeling thank her for yourselves, and for your happy mother !”

her arms, sought by their innocent caresses to soothe and calm her agitation.

In the midst of this scene, Lord Welwyn, and Madame d'Arzele's brother-in-law, the Chevalier de Valcour, arrived. For some time she was incapable of speaking to them, but by degrees her emotion subsiding, she regained all her wonted cheerfulness and vivacity ; ran over her new habitation to shew it to the chevalier, with the same alacrity as if she had not visited it before ; played with her children ; embraced her two friends ; conversed with Lord Welwyn ; and till the hour of separation drew near, was in one perpetual transport of wild joy and enthusiastic gratitude !

Lady Julia, willing to give her friend leisure to settle herself in her tranquil little mansion, forbore calling upon her the three following days : but on the morning of the fourth, still accompanied by Clarentine, and crowded in the chaise by a thousand different presents intended equally for the mother and her children, she determined to visit her.

Madame d'Arzele, when they arrived, was sitting in the garden with her children, the youngest of whom she held upon her knees, whilst the eldest, standing before her, was repeating to her her morning lesson. At a little distance, the Chevalier de Valcour, mounted upon a ladder, was gathering cherries, and throwing them down to the second girl, Pauline, who with her frock held out stood ready to receive them.

Lady Julia and Clarentine remained some time at the garden door to enjoy this scene of domestic happiness, a scene so different to that Clarentine had witnessed the first day this little family had attracted her notice ! At length, however, Pauline turned her head and saw them ; in an instant forgetting her cherries, she dropped them all upon the grass, jumped nimbly over them, and uttering an exclamation of delight, sprang towards the smiling friends with open

arms, and led them to her mother, whose joy on beholding them was scarcely less rapturous than that of her lovely little daughter.

When calmness was restored, and the whole party had adjourned to the usual sitting room, Clarentine and Lady Julia had an opportunity, for the first time, of judging from their own observation, of the conversation and character of the Chevalier. The reserve usually felt by persons of a retired disposition when they are first introduced to each other, had now given place to greater ease and confidence—and as he spoke with less restraint they answered with less embarrassment.

If by the little they had hitherto seen of him, they had been prejudiced in his favour by the gentleness of his manners, and the elegance of his address, how much more on this interview were they charmed by the information, the liberality of mind, and the kindness of heart they found he possessed. Attentive only to the wishes of others, he forgot his own in his desire to gratify theirs ; without officiousness, or affectation, he was the most friendly, the most active of human beings in the service of those he loved. Silent and grave before strangers, yet in the society of people he could put confidence in, he was open, cheerful, and communicative. Detesting from principle, and averse by nature to that species of unmeaning gallantry so often attributed, with reason, to the natives of his country as a characteristic blemish, he was as little disposed to flatter, as he was to wound. Quiet, simple, and rational, his expressions were dictated by sincerity, his conduct guided by understanding and judgment.

It may be well imagined that such a man as this, endowed in addition to all these advantages, with a deportment at once dignified and respectful, and a countenance the most interesting and expressive, could not fail, as he became more intimately known, to be-

come also more particularly approved. The two friends were enchanted with him ; and as they returned home, forgot their usual subjects of conversation, Madame d'Arzele and her children, to speak only of the Chevalier de Valcour.

CHAPTER XII.

DURING the remaining three weeks that Clarentine spent with Lady Julia, scarcely three days were suffered to elapse without visiting Madame d'Arzele, or sending for her to Welwyn park. In the course of that time Lady Julia had succeeded in furnishing her house completely not only with necessaries, but with what to people of cultivation are absolute luxuries, such as books ; a well chosen collection of which, in French, she had sent for from town ; an excellent harp that had been purchased for her by her father some time before, but which, as she found she made no progress, she readily gave up, Madame d'Arzele being an uncommonly fine player ; a complete set of maps for the children, and all the music, for their mother, that had been bought for herself.

Clarentine, who since her arrival at Welwyn had kept up a regular correspondence with Sophia Delmington, chiefly for the pleasure of talking to her of her French friend, had likewise excited in her and her mother the most ardent wish to become acquainted with so interesting a creature. Accordingly soon after Clarentine's return home a day was fixed, and her aunt, herself, Harriet and Sophia all rode over to *Mont-Repos*, the name Madame d'Arzele had given to her peaceful habitation.

She received them with that distinguished elegance and good breeding, for which the women of

high birth and fashion were formerly so remarkable in France. Her conversation, in which gaiety was blended with softness, *finesse* and pleasantry with the most delicate fear of offending; her countenance, which for ever varying, was for ever attractive; her cultivation, her talents and entertainment, all gave rise, in her enchanted visitors, to the most unbounded astonishment and admiration.

When the first compliments were over, and they had all taken their seats, Sophia, who had heard much of the Chevalier, and was impatient to see him, besought Clarentine in a low voice, to ask why he did not appear?

"He is gone to dine at Welwyn Park," answered Madame d'Arzele, "where I believe he will spend the evening."

This intelligence seemed by no means to delight Sophia, though she had the good sense to disguise her vexation, and occasionally to join in the conversation with all her accustomed spirit and vivacity.

About an hour before they took leave, Madame d'Arzele's two little girls, anxious to shew Clarentine what a delightful *Escarpolette** the Chevalier had that morning put up for them in the garden, pressed her so much to go down and look at it, that at last she consented, and accompanied by Sophia left the room.

Shortly after the Chevalier returned. The sound of voices in the garden, the laughter and the gaiety that seemed to reign there, attracted him immediately to the spot, where seated in the *Escarpolette* with her back turned towards him, he beheld Sophia holding one of his little nieces on each knee, whilst Clarentine was exerting her utmost strength in the agreeable office of swinging them.

Advancing cautiously forward, he was at Clarentine's elbow before she even suspected he was re-

* Swing.

turned. Her surprise on seeing him would have led her to utter some sudden exclamation: but a sign he made the moment she turned her head withheld her from speaking, and induced her quietly to resign her fatiguing post, and retire to a greater distance.

The Chevalier, whose health and strength rendered him scarcely more adequate to the task, then was the person he had just relieved, had pursued his occupation but a few minutes, when Sophia, looking back to urge her friend to greater speed, saw him, and almost screaming with astonishment, sprung from her seat with the two children in her arms, left them both upon the ground, and ran as quick as lightning towards the house, and upstairs in an instant!

Extremely amused by this *brusque* retreat, the Chevalier and Clarentine stood some time laughing at the causeless terror her looks had displayed, and then proceeded towards the drawing-room together.

Sophia heard their voices upon the stairs, and moving her chair back as much as possible, sought to conceal herself behind her mother and sister, in the vain hope that as the evening was beginning to shut in, she should escape, at least for that once, meeting the eyes of him whom but a short time before she had so earnestly wished to behold.

Clarentine now entered with the two children, and the Chevalier the next moment followed her.

Madame d'Arzelé no sooner saw him, than she exclaimed, "Ah, voila, notre bon Chevalier!"* and then immediately requested permission to introduce him to Lady Delmington and her daughters.

Sophia trembling at the word *daughters*, would have slipped unperceived out of the room till the formidable presentation was over, but was prevented by the the two little girls, who perceiving her design, put themselves between her and the door, and laughing called out, "Ah, Mademoiselle, vous n'échap-

* "Ah, here comes our good Chevalier."

perez pas comme cela ! Remerciez auparavant mon oncle de vous avoir si bien balance !”*

Sophia finding that this speech drew upon her the attention of the whole party, but particularly that of the Chevalier, stopped irresolute—coloured violently, and to his respectful bow, returned a slight, embarrassed curtsey, and without daring to look up, retreated hastily to her former seat.

Clarentine followed her, and leaning over the back of her chair was beginning to speak, when Madame d’Arzele, extremely desirous of knowing to what her children had alluded, called the eldest to her, and asked for an explanation.

“O mama,” cried Eugene, distressed at the confusion she had already occasioned, “Mademoiselle Sophia may not like, perhaps, that I should tell.”

This answer, though *bonnement* intended for that purpose, was but little calculated to silence farther inquiries. Lady Delmington, now as anxious to be informed as Madame d’Arzele herself, questioned Clarentine so closely, that at last the whole important secret was revealed.

“Ah, mon dieu ! n’est-ce que cela ?” cried Madame d’Arzele, with a laugh—“En verité, Mademoiselle Sophie, il n’y avoit pas de quoi roger si cruellement. Le Chevalier m’a balancé ce matin, dans cette meme escarpolette, une demi heure de suite, et jamais je ne me serez avisée d’en avoir honte.”†

“Nor Sophia neither, in all probability,” answered Lady Delmington, smiling, “had she not been so much taken by surprise. The Chevalier, I think, is entitled, however, to her best thanks for his polite-

* “Ah, Mademoiselle, you must not escape us thus ! Pray thank my uncle first for having swung you so well !”

† “Bless me ! Was that all ? Indeed, Mademoiselle Sophie, I see nothing in all this that need have made you blush so cruelly. The Chevalier swung me this morning near half an hour—yet I should never have looked upon it as a thing to be ashamed of.”

ness in undertaking such an office, especially as he was disinterested enough to do it even unknown to the person whom he obliged."

The Chevalier laughed and bowed; but forebore dwelling upon the subject, from motives of good nature, as he still plainly saw it disconcerted Sophia extremely.

After this first introduction, the Delmingtons soon became as intimate with Madame d'Arzele as Lord Welwyn himself. The pleasure of having, in so near a neighbour, so agreeable an acquaintance, at a season when visiting was so practicable; the hope also, by shewing her all the interest and affection she inspired, of softening the remembrance of her recent sorrows, and of supplying to her, in some measure, the place of those friends she had so unhappily lost—all these motives combined occasioned an intercourse far more frequent, than, had she been in more prosperous circumstances, would perhaps have taken place. Lady Delmington, though she rarely walked so far herself, never denied her daughters or Clarentine the permission of doing it; and consequently their visits at *Mont-Repos* whilst the weather allowed it, were almost daily. As the winter approached, however, they were necessitated, of course, to retrench them; yet, even then, Clarentine's warmth of attachment led her dauntlessly to brave the severest temperature of a December day, and with steps as light as her heart to sally gaily forth, wrapt round in a long *Pè-kisse*, for the habitation of her friend.

At those times, when the weather was too boisterous to allow of her return home the same evening, some shepherd's boy from the adjacent village used to be despatched with a note to Delmington, to request leave for her to stay till morning. This, her aunt, rather than send the servants and horses out at such a season, always consented to; and the more readily, from being persuaded, that Clarentine, whilst

with Madame d'Arzele, could reap nothing but benefit, and enjoy nothing but satisfaction.

It was, during one of these bleak and stormy evenings, towards the latter end of January, that whilst Madame d'Arzele and Clarentine, who was that night to sleep there, were engaged in conversation before a cheerful fire, the former suddenly turning to her young friend, with more than usual tenderness, said—

“ My Clarentine, for you now allow me to call you by that endearing name, explain to me by what strange circumstance it could happen, that you, an Englishwoman, born in a province so remote from our coast, and where *les usages* of our country are so little known, should have been baptised by a name, which to English ears must sound so romantic ; and which, though absolutely French, is by no means common, even among us, since I never knew more than *one* person before, that was so called ? ”

Clarentine, struck by the tone of voice with which Madame d'Arzele spoke these last words, took her hand the moment she paused, and said—

“ That person, whom you mention with so melancholy a look—was she dear to you ? ”

“ Oh ! dearer than any being upon earth ! She was my sister. ”

“ Ah, tell me, ” cried Clarentine, with an earnestness she could neither repress, nor account for ; “ tell me, what was her story ? Why do you speak of her with such emotion and sadness ? ”

“ Alas ! ” answered Madame d'Arzele, in asking for her story, you demand more than I have power to grant. I never heard the exact particulars of it myself. Probably they were concealed from me from motives of prudence, it being well known that whatever might have been her errors, I should be the last to see them with that indignation they seemed to

have excited in every other individual of my family. I loved her too tenderly not to pity and forgive her faults; and the knowledge of them, therefore, was deemed the more dangerous."

"Was it by an imprudent marriage she thus forfeited her parent's favour?"

"It was—she formed a secret connexion with a young foreigner whom accident introduced to her acquaintance at the English Ambassador's, during the absence of my father, who had confided her to the care of a distant relation, and from the hour of its being discovered, she was cast off by the whole offended family."

"Good Heaven! and was that foreigner an Englishman?"

"Indeed," replied Madame d'Arzele, "I know not. His name was held in such detestation in our house that it was never mentioned before me, and when this lamented event took place, I was yet only seven years old, and consequently too young to be admitted into company, or entrusted with family affairs. As I grew up the mention of my poor Clarentine was equally forbidden—an impenetrable veil was thrown over her story—her fate was never inquired into—her existence, to all appearance, no more remembered!"

Clarentine, inexpressibly agitated during this whole conversation, acquainted with all the unhappy circumstances relating to her mother's marriage, and petrified with amazement at a conformity of coincidences so striking and so singular, now, almost gasping for breath, said with the utmost emotion—

"I cannot be mistaken—that sister, whom you so tenderly lament—you so fondly loved; Clarentine de Céligni was—my mother!"

Madame d'Arzele, starting at these words, with a look of wild astonishment, of mixed doubt, irresolution, and extacy, gazed some moments at the weep-

ing Clarentine, without having power to speak, and then exclaimed—

“Are you then—Oh, God! is it possible? Are *you*, dearest girl, the daughter of Clarentine de Celigni? of that sister, that friend, whom no disparity of age, no time, no absence could ever erase from my remembrance, or my heart? Can it be true? Oh speak; hasten to assure me once again, that I may, indeed, give credit to such a tale of joy.”

Clarentine, too deeply affected to be capable of making any answer, threw herself into her arms with a look that so expressively seemed to implore her belief, her acknowledgment and love, that giving way to all the fulness of her heart, Madame d’Arzele pressed her with transport to her bosom, and bathed her face with tears of the most affectionate sensibility and rapture.

The relation now followed of Clarentine’s whole history, from the hour of her arrival in England, to the present moment. The premature death of her unhappy sister, which till this explanation, Madame d’Arzele had but a vague apprehension of, filled them both during its recital with grief and sadness, and most painfully embittered the first sensations of delight, occasioned by a discovery so interesting and so unexpected. The sequel of Clarentine’s recital, however, by degrees effaced these melancholy impressions, and left at its conclusion no traces upon the mind, but those of gratitude towards the friends, who, from her infancy, had so generously protected her.

Madame d’Arzele, when Clarentine had ended, embraced and thanked her repeatedly for her simple little narrative. Then adverting to the calamities that had driven her and her children from France, “Till now,” cried she, “I could only lament them with bitterness and sorrow. Methinks, however, this moment recompenses me for every suffering I

have endured ! Oh, that my poor father, extinguishing his resentment against the mother, in his love for her daughter, my sweet and amiable Clarentine, could have shared in my present transports !”

At that moment the Chevalier de Valcour, who had been reading in another room, entered. Madame d'Arzele assured of the interest he would take in such a communication, instantly made him acquainted with the cause of that emotion their countenances still so visibly betrayed. He heard her with a degree of surprise scarcely inferior to that she had herself experienced ; and when she ceased, expressed with the utmost warmth the joy he felt upon the occasion, and congratulated them both upon a consanguinity that would now add a stronger tie than ever to the friendship they had already formed.

BOOK II.

CHAPTER I.

“ A la naïve franchise, aux graces de l'Enfance
Elle joint de la jeunesse les talents, l'Innocence ;
Belle sans le savoir la plus douce candeur,
Regne dans ses regards, ainsi que dans son cœur.”

RECUEIL DE POESIES ANONYME.

SEVERAL months now elapsed in so calm and peaceful a manner, that nothing of any importance seemed to mark their progress. All that occurred during that period was the promotion of Frederick Delmington, at the age of nineteen, to a lieutenancy by the interest and interference of Lord Welwyn, and the rise of William Somerset to the rank of post-captain.

Meanwhile, Sir Edgar, removed to Oxford, and more rarely seen at home than ever, was become, during the vacations, a distinguished favourite with, and a frequent visitor at Lord Welwyn's. Alarmed at the progress of his attachment, and afraid to trust himself in the society of Clarentine, whose powers of attraction every day increased, he resolutely denied himself so dangerous an indulgence, and glad of any excuse to shun her, always eagerly accepted the invitations Lord Welwyn honoured him with.

Lady Julia commonly chose the time of his residence at her father's to pay a visit at Delmington House, Lord Welwyn then having a companion, and being less reluctantly induced to part with her.

Once, however, on the very day of Sir Edgar's arrival at the park, being seized with some slight illness, she sent an apology to Lady Delmington for deferring her promised visit, and ended her note with a request to see Clarentine immediately, for whom she sent the carriage.

Lady Delmington on this occasion was extremely perplexed how to act. To deny Clarentine the permission of going, at the time, of all others, when her friend's indisposition rendered her company most desirable to her, she thought might appear capricious and unkind, especially as she had been in habits of so readily and frequently allowing her that indulgence. Yet, when after an absence of three months, when Edgar was at the house, to send her to it, without any companion, Lady Julia ill, and no other woman in the family, seemed to be absolutely throwing her in his way, and voluntarily reviving all the terrors she had formerly endured on their account. Mrs. Harrington too was hourly expected. What would be her indignation, when she heard that such was the imprudent confidence with which she trusted them together, fearless of observation, and relieved from all constraint?

"No," cried Lady Delmington, "I must not suffer it; Clarentine must remain, and, in her stead, one of my own girls shall hasten to Lady Julia."

She then instantly wrote to her ladyship, to inform her that Emma, not being quite well (and such, in fact, was the case), Clarentine, who was more used to her than any body, could not at that moment be spared; but that if she wished it, either Harriet, or Sophia, should be sent to her in the evening.

Lady Julia, to whom it was almost indifferent which she received, sent back a verbal message to say she should be happy to see *either* or *both* the Miss Delmingtons as soon as it was convenient.

Accordingly, Sophia, who of the two flattered herself, and with reason that she was preferred, went to her that very evening. She staid about a week, and then came back with her convalescent friend.

Anxious to communicate all she had observed during her visit, and habitually inclined to be more confidential with Clarentine than with any one else, Sophia ran into her room the moment she arrived, and throwing herself into a chair, thus began—

"My dear Clarentine, I have a million of things to tell you; come, sit down, and hear me attentively."

"I will," cried Clarentine, laughing—"Now, therefore speak."

"Well then, let me begin by informing you, that I have made *three extraordinary* discoveries, one relating to Lady Julia, the pensive and pathetic; the other to Edgar, the *ci-devant* spirited and gay; and the third to *myself*, the madcap and the giddy."

"Admirably characterised all three!" said Clarentine—"pray go on."

"You must know then, that with regard to Lady Julia, resumed Sophia", whom, of course, I shall speak of first, I have found out that she is in love."

“ In love !—and with whom ? ”

“ With that identical *ci-devant* I just mentioned. Whilst I was with her, she betrayed herself a thousand different ways. To enumerate all the various symptoms, would be never ending: symptom the first, however, was, that she blushed whenever he looked at her; yet, Heaven knows! his looks were not very significant: symptom the second, she sighed whenever he left her, if but for a moment: symptom the third, she faltered whenever he addressed her, and yet hated to be addressed by any other. Now all these intelligent symptoms were so visible, that I should by no means be surprised, if Edgar understood them as well as I do, and had clearly penetrated her sentiments.”

“ If they are such as he wished to excite,” answered Clarentine, “ it is most probable he has. But now, Sophia, tell me what discovery you have made concerning *yourself*.”

Sophia laughed, hesitated a moment, looked very arch, and then said—“ You have a thousand times more common sense than I have, Clarentine, and therefore I intrust you with this important secret; but you must promise me not to put on your *grand sérieux*, not to *sermonise* me. I allow you to laugh as much as you please; all I require is, that you do not scold me.”

“ I *shall* scold you, indeed,” cried Clarentine, “ if you keep me thus long in suspense. Confess your sins at once, good girl, and if I can, I will give you immediate absolution.”

Sophia still remained irresolute some minutes—changed colour—walked about the room with an air of the most comic perplexity, and then, summoning all her courage, and speaking very quick, she said—“ During my late visit, it happened, for my sins, that your odious Chevalier de Valcour found some pretext to come to the house almost every day. At one

time it was with a book he had borrowed ; at another, with a note from his sister ; the day after, with thanks, for some little present that had been sent them ; *enfin*, he had always the art of being well received when he arrived, and the pleasure of being visibly regreted when he parted. Meanwhile, what was to become of *me* ? Often left whole hours *tete-a-tete* with him ; whilst Lady Julia was playing the Phillis with *her* Corydon, and my Lord was shut up in his study, how was I to resist the prevalence of example, and shew myself wiser than my neighbour ? In good truth, I know not, for—I did not even try ; but trusting to chance for its escape from infection, I e'en left my heart to its own guidance, and before the week was at an end, found I had irrecoverably lost it !”

Here Clarentine, who had with difficulty preserved her gravity so long, gave way to all the risibility this account was calculated to excite.

“ Ah, my poor Sophia !” exclaimed she, “ this odious Chevalier, I am afraid, was much more *significant* in his glances, than your insensible brother !”

“ Not at all,” answered Sophia, eagerly, “ the worst of the business is, that the wretch, though he seemed *diverted* by the strange things I said to him, by my *brusqueries*, and caprices, never lost his insupportable good humour a moment, but used to laugh at me as people do at an entertaining, spoilt child ; call me always, *la jolie Sauvage* ; and treat me with such an humiliating sort of indulgence, that more than once, I felt tempted to fly at his face, and demand satisfaction for such insults.”

“ O, come,” cried Clarentine, “ if you can talk thus gaily of your lover’s indifference, I begin to have some hopes of your speedy recovery.”

“ As for that,” returned Sophia, “ I put but a feeble dependence upon my gaiety, for I do not believe it will ever be in the power of any sentiment of this

kind to bereave me of it for an instant—yet the sentiment may still exist, and though not with the same solemnity it would in a sentimental Lady Julia, may still, at times, torment me. If I could, however, but for one moment, succeed in putting the Chevalier into a *serious passion*; make him very fretful, very comfortless, I think I should be happy; since the next best thing to being *beloved*, in my opinion is being *feared*.”

“Being *hated* you mean. But my dear girl, as I foresee this subject might prove inexhaustible if pursued, and we may soon be summoned to dinner, try whether for a moment you cannot forget your *ingrate*, to acquaint me with the *third* discovery you talked of.”

“Ah, true; I was very near forgetting it. Know then, my dear Clarentine, that I have one concern that affects me infinitely more than all the indifference of my provoking favourite. Poor Edgar, I suspect, has got into debt at Oxford; the terror he shews whenever any letters are brought to him; the agitation with which he reads them; the disappearance, in Frederick’s style, of his watch, which, during the whole time I was at Welwyn park, I never saw him wear; and more than all, the continual anxiety observable in his countenance, incline me to think I cannot be mistaken. Yesterday I questioned him about the watch; at first, he answered me with embarrassment and confusion, but on my pressing him still closer, became quite angry, and hastily left the room. He is new to all this yet; but if he begins so early, habit, I fear, will soon familiarise him to the uneasiness he now feels.”

“O, be more merciful, Sophia!” cried Clarentine, warmly. “If he is in debt, this, I am sure, is the first time, and that very agitation you remarked in him ought to convince you it will be the last. I pity him with my whole heart, and wish most sincerely that I

knew how to assist him. Conceal your suspicions from your mother, and let us question Mr. Aukland upon the subject; he must know something of the truth."

"We will walk down to his house this evening," said Sophia, "and if he is at home, I will undertake to draw the whole secret from him. That this debt is formidable, I can have but little doubt, since ample as is Edgar's allowance, it is not a trifling sum that could distress him thus."

Being now called to dinner, the subject was dropped, and they both hurried down.

Their meal over, Clarentine, whilst preparing to set out for Mr. Aukland's, suddenly recollected the pocket-book, William Somerset near four years before, had put into her hands. Though so considerable an interval had elapsed since she had received it, so adequate to all her simple wants was the little allowance furnished her by Lady Delmington, that she had almost forgot she possessed it, and had not once applied to its contents.

"Now is the time," cried she, as she opened her desk, "to have recourse to this sum. Mr. Somerset will applaud such a use of his bounty, and poor Edgar, perhaps, may be benefited by it materially."

She now took out the pocket book, and unclasping it with a beating heart, began to examine the notes it enclosed. They were three in number of 10*l.* each. Clarentine, delighted and surprised at her own riches, determined instantly to appropriate the whole to Edgar's use, if she found him sufficiently involved to require it.

This to her, who so little knew the value of money; who had never till this moment, though now arrived at the age of seventeen, experienced the want of it, either for herself or her friends; Madame d'Arzele being, by the liberality of Lord Welwyn, amply provided with every necessary and comfort; was no

very great sacrifice. She lived too much out of the world to be tempted to spend much in the vanity of dress; she saw too little of that extreme poverty in the neighbouring villages, which large towns continually exhibit, to feel any scruple in spending it, as her friendship for Edgar, and her gratitude to his family now directed; and she thought too nobly of Lady Delmington to imagine that she could ever be taught, by being exiled from her roof, to regret having made such a disposal of it.

Impatient to announce her resources and her decision to Sophia, she safely deposited her pocket-book in its usual recess, and hastened down to the parlour in search of her.

She found her in the hall, already prepared for their walk, and waiting anxiously for her.

Clarentine, excusing herself for having detained her, took her under the arm, and they left the house together. After proceeding some way a very quick pace, without allowing themselves breath to speak, they both, by mutual consent, paused a moment, and insensibly renewed the conversation of the morning.

“You have not, I hope mentioned your apprehensions to Harriet yet?” said Clarentine.

“No,” answered Sophia, “nor do I intend acquainting her with them at all. Harriet is a very good girl; but she is not extremely subject to compassionating the weaknesses of her fellow-creatures; and though Edgar might not care much for her remonstrances, I don’t choose to render him liable to hearing them.”

Clarentine then spoke of the treasure she possessed; and was proceeding to declare the use she had resolved to apply it to, when hastily interrupting her with a look of mixed incredulity and amazement, Sophia exclaimed, “is it possible, Clarentine, you should *really* have such a sum? Thirty pounds! Good Heaven! when did Mr. Somerset give it to you, and for what?”

Clarentine hesitated—the motive that had prompted the donation, the causeless fears that had occasioned it, she was unwilling to own, since those fears had, in the event, proved so totally unfounded, and might lead Sophia on hearing them so justly to accuse Somerset of illiberality and distrust. After a moment's reflection, she therefore answered—

“He gave it me to dispose of when I grew older, either in acts of charity, or in any other way I chose. Hitherto the objects that have fallen under my notice have been so few, your excellent mother so generously relieves all she hears of, and so abundantly supplies me with every necessary, that I have had no temptation to break into the original sum, and shall therefore give it up, without one moment's regret, to your poor brother, if I find he requires it. Never, my dear Sophia, must he suspect the hand, however, that offers it; never must the rest of your family hear of the transaction. Promise me, on your word of honour, solemnly promise me, never to mention it.”

“I will make no such promise,” cried Sophia, “It would shock me to think that money you can so generously part with should be lavished on an unthinking prodigal like Edgar?”

“O talk not thus unkindly of him!” cried Clarentine; “say not that you lament such a disposal of this sum, since, if in thus bestowing it, I can preserve him from the necessity of revealing his distresses to his mother, I shall think it but an act of duty, a retribution, due in justice from me to his family!”

They were now arrived at Mr. Aukland's gate; Sophia rang, and the maid who admitted them shewed them into a parlour, where alone, and pacing the room with great agitation, they perceived Sir Edgar—

Clarentine, extremely surprised—disconcerted in all her measures, and at a loss how to account for her visit, started back with a look of consciousness and

embarrassment, and then stood silently regarding Sophia, without knowing whether to advance or retreat.

Meanwhile Sir Edgar, eagerly approaching, seized her hand, and in a voice that betrayed the utmost emotion, said—

“ Whence comes my dearest Clarentine ? To whom this unusual visit.”

Clarentine changed colour and faintly replied, “ We came to consult with Mr. Aukland, to ask him some questions. Pray is he at home ?”

“ No, but he is expected every moment. Sit down, my Clarentine, you look hurried, you are out of breath ; what is it that has disturbed you thus ?”

“ How apt we are,” said Sophia archly, “ to attribute to others the same sensations we are conscious of feeling ourselves. Clarentine looks the image of tranquillity, Edgar, compared to *you* !”

Edgar, extremely disconcerted, turned away without speaking, and walked to the window. A silence of some minutes succeeded, during which Clarentine observed him with concern, Sophia with curiosity ; at length the former rising and following him said with that innocent familiarity, and undisguised affection she was wont from her infancy to address him, “ You are unhappy, my dear Edgar ; you seem depressed and melancholy ; tell me, as to one of your oldest, and truest friends, tell me what occasions this. Are you ill ?”

In answer to this inquiry, Edgar shook his head, and without venturing to look round, leaned his forehead against the frame of the window, and waved his hand for her to leave him. Clarentine, distressed and hurt by this behaviour, now resumed, in a tone of mixed sorrow and reproach—“ Is this kind, Edgar ? Is this friendly ? Why will you not answer me ? What is it you fear ? Remonstrance ? I have neither disposition or authority to utter any. Breach of

trust? I pledge to you my honour never to betray you. Then be sincere, *dear* Edgar, and convince me by reposing some confidence in me, that I have not wholly forfeited the affection you formerly professed for me."

"Oh, what is it you ask?" at length exclaimed he, abruptly turning to her, "what is it you would know? I cannot, Clarentine, I cannot make the humiliating confession? Spare me, dearest girl, and question me no more."

"Bless me, Edgar," exclaimed Sophia, "if you are so tragical, you'll lead us to suspect I know not what! Come let me help you out, and by *guessing* at your secret, endeavour to spare you the mortification of revealing it. Look at me a moment; look at me well, and then tell me, whether all these qualms and agitations do not arise from your having contracted some foolish debt?—See Clarentine, he colours! my life for it, I am right!"

Edgar was silent a moment, and then in a low voice answered, "you are indeed, Sophia!"

"*C'est ce qu'on appelle parler, cela!*" cried she, "you are a good creature now, and I feel half inclined to forgive you; but you must tell us first, how you incurred this debt, and to what it amounts."

"It amounts," answered he, speaking very quick, and averting his eyes, "to 200*l.* and I incurred it at play!"

At the mention of such a sum Clarentine and Sophia turning pale, started, and in silent consternation gazed at each other a considerable time. At length Sophia recovering first, said—

"And what Sir, may I ask, is your plan? Whom do you mean to apply to?"

"Not to my mother," answered he, "for I have already drawn upon her to a large amount, and far exceeded the stipend she allotted me. Not to Mrs. Harrington, for to hope from her any thing but re-

proach and insult would be madness. Not to my college friends, for with them my credit is exhausted."

"Good God!" interrupted Sophia with quickness, "are your debts then so numerous? Do you owe even more than this 200l.?"

"I owe," said he, with affected calmness, "more than the whole amount of my next half year's allowance, that is to say, more than 250l. will pay!"

"Independent of this play debt?"

"Yes, utterly?"

"Heaven and earth!" exclaimed the indignant Sophia, "what unheard of extravagance! 450l. in less than a year! I could not have believed you capable of such folly, to call it by no worse an appellation!"

"Hush, hush, Sophia;" cried Clarentine mildly, "this was not the condition upon which we sought his confidence; the evil is past, and since we cannot remedy, our part is not to blame."

"Ah! dearest Clarentine!" exclaimed Edgar, extremely softened, "little as I deserve it, how grateful do I feel for this lenity! you are the sweetest, as you have ever been the most beloved of friends! How is it, that although thinking and acting uniformly right yourself, you retain an indulgence so considerate, a pity so consolatory for the errors of others. I was almost in a state of desperation till you arrived; but *your* voice, *your* looks, have calmed, have soothed me, and once more restored me to reason."

"If such is her power over you," cried Sophia, affecting a tone of sarcasm, though her countenance bore visible testimony to the gentler emotions this speech had excited, "it had been fortunate for you, had she rather been at hand to prevent the *loss* of your reason, than to hasten its *restoration*; but tell me, which of these horrible debts is most pressing?"

"That I incurred at play," answered he, "there my honour is at stake—my word the only bond, and

not to pay it immediately, would be to disgrace myself eternally."

"Very likely; but *how* are you to pay it? Had you any purpose in coming hither? Any hopes from Mr. Aukland?"

"Yes—I meant to confess to him the whole affair; to intreat his advice and assistance, and to persuade him, if possible, to lend me half the sum I have the most immediate necessity for."

"And the other half? How is that to be procured?"

"Do not ask me," replied Edgar, colouring, "be content to know I have resources that will enable me to raise——"

"I understand you," interrupted Sophia, "resources, Edgar, you ought to blush at being driven to have recourse to. Your watch I know is gone—so I suppose are your books?"

Edgar was beginning to answer, when, driving past the door in her way to Delmington House, where she had been some days expected, he saw Mrs. Harrington, and instantly retreating from the window, drawing Clarentine away at the same moment—

"O, go, go," he exclaimed, "let her not see you here with me—let her not tell my mother where you have been! Go home immediately, I conjure you."

"Lady Delmington," said Clarentine, amazed at his earnestness, "knows where we are; we have nothing to fear."

"She knew not that *I* should be here," returned Edgar with increased perturbation. "She must not hear of it! Go, I beseech you, and as soon as I have spoken to Mr. Aukland I will hasten back to Welwyn."

He then opened the parlour door, shook hands with them as they passed, and hurried them away.

CHAPTER II.

CLARENTINE and Sophia arrived at their own door about a quarter of an hour after Mrs. Harrington had alighted, having, more from a vague idea of complying with Edgar's injunctions than from any personal apprehensions, hurried extremely the whole way. In the hall they debated some time between themselves whether immediately to join the family in the parlour, or wait till they were summoned to tea. At length, however, they agreed to go in, and composing their features as well as they could, opened the door and advanced.

Lady Julia, brightening up at their approach, nodded good-humouredly to Clarentine, and holding out her hand to her, said—

“Where have you been all this afternoon, my dear girl?”

“At Mr. Aukland's,” answered Clarentine, curt-seying as she spoke to Mrs. Harrington, who without rising, only returned her civility by a stiff bow.

“Was he at home?” said Lady Delmington.

“No, madam; but hearing he was expected in every moment, we sat down and waited for him in vain, till now?”

“Did not I,” said Mrs. Harrington, “see you standing at the window as I drove by?”

“Yes, madam, I believe you did.”

“And who was there with you?”

Clarentine, innocent as she was, and ready as she would have been, but for Edgar's mysterious caution, to answer unhesitatingly this enquiry blushed deeply as it was uttered, and crossing the room as she spoke, upon pretence of putting away her cloak, replied in an ill assured voice—

“It was Sir Edgar Delmington you saw, I fancy, madam.”

"My son?" cried Lady Delmington, with quickness—"and what led him to Mr. Aukland's at so unusual an hour?"

Clarentine, ill-versed in dissimulation, yet but too well aware of its necessity in this case, affected to be still busied in folding up her gloves and cloak at the other end of the room, the better to conceal her embarrassment, and keeping as close to the truth as she could, answered—

"He told us he had some business he wished to consult Mr. Aukland upon."

"And you ladies staid," said Mrs. Harrington drily, "during the consultation, to assist them by your wisdom, and experience?"

"No, Madam," cried Sophia, attempting to speak with gaiety, "we were obliged unfortunately to hasten away before Mr. Aukland returned!"

"In my opinion," said Mrs. Harrington, assuming a graver look, "you had no business to remain a moment after you found Mr. Aukland was out."

"Dear Ma'am," cried Sophia, "what harm could there be in our sitting to talk a few minutes with Edgar? We had not—that is, Clarentine had not seen him, these ten days."

To this Mrs. Harrington, though she looked extremely discontented, did not think proper before Lady Julia to make any reply, and therefore to the great joy of the two friends, the subject was dropped.

Just as they were sitting down to supper, a servant entered with a note for Sophia. Her mother asking who it came from, she said from Edgar, and put it into her pocket.

"Don't you read it directly?" said Lady Julia—

"No," answered Sophia, "it can contain nothing of any moment."

"Read it notwithstanding," said Lady Delmington, "perhaps he wishes to have something sent to him."

Sophia drew a candle near her, opened it, and found in it these words—

TO MISS S. DELMINGTON.

“All is well, my dear Sophia. Mr. Aukland made no difficulty in supplying me. He has promised inviolable secrecy. Do not you, by any imprudence, betray me. Adieu, love to dear Clarentine, and am yours in great haste,
E. D.

“No questions, I hope, were asked after you got home? I shall breakfast with you to-morrow.”

“Well,” said Lady Delmington, when she had done reading, “what does he say to you?”

“That he shall breakfast here in the morning,” answered Sophia.

“He was not wont,” said Lady Delmington smiling, “to be so formal as to give notice of such an intention the day before.”

“Neither,” said Sophia, anxious, by giving some plausible reason for his conduct, to preclude all further enquiries, “was he wont to be so great a stranger in his own family. It is now many months, I believe, since he partook any meal with us.”

“I should be loth to imagine,” said Lady Delmington, “that he therefore considered, and meant in future to treat us, as absolute strangers.”

“I am sure,” said Lady Julia, “at the house he is now in, he will not, at least, be encouraged in such sentiments.”

“I am apt consequently to suspect,” said Mrs. Harrington, stedfastly regarding Sophia, whilst she spoke, “that Sir Edgar’s note contained intelligence far more interesting than was imparted to us.”

Sophia turned pale at this insinuation, and for a few minutes a general silence ensued. Lady Delmington was the first to break it.

“Secrecy, I have often heard,” cried she, “always implies some wrong. This perhaps, at times may be true : but as I have never been in the habit of extorting my children’s confidence by authoritative means, and as I am persuaded there may frequently, between an affectionate brother and sister, be little private communications interesting only to themselves, and in their own nature perfectly harmless, I have made it a rule never to interfere upon these occasions, when by any act of indiscretion they put themselves in danger of being betrayed.”

There was a liberality, a kindness in this speech that immediately, and almost unconsciously imposed silence upon Mrs. Harrington, restored Sophia to her usual cheerfulness, and afforded a most welcome relief to poor Clarentine, who from the beginning of the conversation had sat the picture of terror, not daring to raise her eyes, changing colour every minute, and trembling lest Sophia, by any unguarded expression, should excite in the mind of her mother a suspicion of the real truth.

Early the next morning, Sophia with Edgar’s note in her hand, was at Clarentine’s door : after reading it to her—

“I am come,” cried she, “to dissuade you finally, my dear girl, from the generous design you yesterday mentioned to me. The gift you proposed bestowing upon this prodigal brother of mine, enormous as, from so young a giver, it would seem, could in fact prove of very little, if *any*, use to him. He acknowledges, in addition to this play debt, to have others of a yet more considerable amount. Can you discharge *them*? And if you could, would it not be encouraging his extravagance? O Clarentine, retain this money for some nobler use, and bestow it not as a recompense for misconduct.”

“No,” cried Clarentine, “I had a better purpose to answer when I talked of bestowing it on your

brother : I wished to save him from public shame, to preserve him from the hardening effects of open disgrace. Should he once overcome the dread he now feels of reproach and discovery, he is lost for ever ! This debt paid, the others, I thought, he might discharge by degrees ; he says himself *they* are not so pressing ; a little firmness, economy, and self-denial, would soon extricate him wholly."

" I wish it might prove so," said Sophia ; " though I greatly fear the more easy he finds it to gain credit, the less scrupulous he will become."

Clarentine hastily interrupted her : " I have no fears," cried she with earnestness ; " Edgar's principles are well known to me ; they are naturally those of rectitude and honour ; he has a feeling and generous disposition ; and though his passions may be strong, and his conduct may for a while have been faulty, his *head*, and not his *heart*, has been to blame. As a proof of this you find how sensible he is to the past kindness of your mother ; how unwilling to take further advantage of that kindness ; and how ready, sooner than distress her by fresh applications, to part with all his valuables even at the risk of immediate detection. My dearest Sophia, suffer me then still to indulge the hope that I may be useful to him ; and since you will not lend me that assistance I had ventured to expect from you, at least give me your word not to reveal to any other the conversations we have had upon the subject."

" I told you before, my best Clarentine," cried Sophia, " and I now repeat what I then said, I would not for the universe make any such promise. The moment I have reason to suspect you of having been guilty of so great a piece of folly, I openly confess the whole affair to my mother, and involve Edgar, as well as you, in a general discovery. Do not therefore accuse me of unkindness to him, or breach of trust with regard to you. To do *him* a *real* service,

to oblige *you* in a *rational* way, I would scarcely hesitate at any thing : but mad as I sometimes am, I will never contribute towards carrying on an affair, for which I should so deservedly merit a cell in Bedlam for life. To prevent all possibility consequently of your persisting in this design, I now solemnly declare to you, that unless you give me your word of honour to drop the whole scheme, I will this very morning make Edgar acquainted with it, on purpose to put him upon his guard against receiving any money that may come to him through an unknown channel."

The seriousness and earnestness with which this was uttered terrified Clarentine, who, after vainly endeavouring to make Sophia retract her alarming threat, promised to think no more of the business, but to let matters take their own course, without interfering in their arrangement in any way whatever.

At nine o'clock, Sir Edgar, according to his appointment, arrived. He looked more cheerful than he had done for some time, yet still at intervals appeared absent and thoughtful. Clarentine almost rejoiced to observe it, since it at once evinced sensibility and contrition. She sought not however to speak to him in private, and advised Sophia to observe the same caution.

At an early hour he ordered his horse, and rode back to Welwyn.

Lady Julia, as soon as he was gone, threw aside her work, and invited Clarentine to walk with her in the garden.

After conversing some time upon general subjects, Clarentine observing that Lady Julia listened to, and answered her with an air of inattention, that proved she scarcely knew one syllable she had been saying, suddenly stopped, and looking at her with a smile, said—

"Pray, Lady Julia, why did you wish for a companion during your walk?"

“Why?” repeated Julia, surprised at the enquiry, “Because I hate to wander about alone, and always rejoice when I can find an opportunity of conversing with you without restraint.”

“Of *meditating* with me, you mean,” cried Clarentine, “since surely where there are only two, and where *one* only of those two utters a single word, the term *conversation* cannot with any propriety be applied to the *triste*, and unsupported efforts of that solitary speaker.”

Lady Julia coloured, and pressing Clarentine’s hand, replied—

“I acknowledge, dear girl, the justice of your reproof. My silence and stupidity well deserve it, and I ask a thousand pardons for having called it forth. The truth is,” continued she, not suffering Clarentine, who, hurt at her seriousness, would have interrupted her, “my mind is wholly employed in reflecting upon the contents of a letter I received this morning from my father. Can you keep a secret Clarentine? If you can, I will tell you what he says to me.”

“Try me,” said Clarentine, smiling, “and I hope you will have no cause to accuse me of indiscretion.”

“Lady Julia stood suspended a moment, looked confused and irresolute : but on Clarentine’s urging her to proceed, at length went on—

“My father,—I would he had spared me so dangerous a confidence,—charmed with the rectitude of principles, the elegance of manners, the noble generosity of character so conspicuous in Sir Edgar Delmington, has, he informs me, after consulting his mother and family, entered into engagements with the former, which, when he comes of age, are to confirm me his for ever ! The narrowness of Sir Edgar’s fortune was with him no impediment, mine being by the death of my poor brother considerable ; and Mrs. Harrington having, I understand, in consideration of

this alliance, declared she will leave us, at her death, all she possesses."

Clarentine, who had attended to this communication with sparkling eyes, and looks that denoted the most sensible delight, now affectionately embraced Lady Julia, and exclaimed—

"You have long permitted me, dearest Lady Julia, to call you by the name of friend, to treat you with the freedom and familiarity of an equal. Our Edgar, you know, is as dear to me as a brother. This union, the most desirable in every respect that could take place, gives me through him an additional title to your regard; makes me *your* sister, as well as *his*, and leaves me without a wish, except for your mutual and lasting happiness."

"Alas! my Clarentine," cried Lady Julia, shaking her head, "you little suspect how much reason I have to be averse to this, apparently, unobjectionable marriage; to dread it even, and lament it ever was proposed. Sir Edgar has been informed of my father's future intentions in his behalf, yet far from appearing desirous of profiting by them, or of making himself any interest in my heart, he behaves to me with a degree of indifference, of negligence the most mortifying and the most offensive."

Clarentine, sincerely grieved at this speech, attempted however to disguise the concern it gave her under an appearance of incredulity. With a look of assumed gaiety she therefore replied—

"How difficult all these lovers are to please! I really believe there is no passion makes the human heart so suspicious, so perverse! Poor Edgar little imagines he can have merited such a reproach; yet were he to hear it, how flattering to him would it be! But tell me, Lady Julia, and tell me honestly, is it your *pride*, or your *affection*, his supposed indifference wounds the deepest?"

"You ask me," replied Lady Julia, "more than

I know how to answer. When he is present, all resentment I find lost in sorrow; when absent, resentment, nearly unmingled with sorrow, takes the lead."

"I understand this distinction," cried Clarentine, "and am now convinced you love him with all the tenderness that his thousand excellent qualities deserve. This conviction gives me more pleasure than I can well express. Edgar was formed for social happiness, for domestic enjoyments. He loves reading, delights in female society, and is naturally of so affectionate a disposition, that to have known him married to a woman who was not truly sensible of all his worth, would have made me wretched."

"And yet Clarentine," resumed Lady Julia, "whilst he perseveres in his present conduct; whilst coldly subscribing to his mother's plans without being anxious for her success, he continues to treat me with such carelessness and apathy, my fixed determination is, never to become his wife. The renunciation, though it may perhaps be painful to my heart, will be grateful to my insulted pride. I am sure of my father's indulgent acquiescence to this refusal, when once he is convinced I am serious in desiring it; and almost secure likewise of possessing, through *your* early lessons, my dearest Clarentine, sufficient spirit to enable me to conquer my own regret, should I feel any after the rejection becomes public. You first taught me to overcome the habitual indolence of my character, and infused into my mind that resolution and firmness by which I hope to be supported."

"I should be sorry to believe," said Clarentine gravely, "that I had been so wholly mistaken in my notions of *firmness*, and *resolution* as to instil *irritability* and *petulance* in their place. Assure yourself, Lady Julia, I never meant to recommend such substitutes; and grieved indeed should I be, could I

imagine that the sentiments by which you are now actuated had originally been implanted by me. I am convinced you do Sir Edgar the greatest injustice, when you conceive him capable of assenting to the views of his family upon motives so mercenary as those of mere interest and ambition. He may not perhaps, I cannot bring myself, even when pleading for him, to flatter you, feel for you that romantic degree of passion you seem desirous of inspiring; but of this I am certain, he admires you extremely; he appeared sensibly touched by the relation that was given him of your kindness and benevolence towards Madame d'Arzele, and her little family; he reveres and loves your father more than any man he knows, and has the sincerest value for you. What more, in reason, dear, dear Lady Julia, would you wish?"

"Well, my dearest Clarentine," answered Lady Julia, who although she had been a little hurt at the beginning of this speech, could not forbear smiling at its conclusion, "I may have been wrong, I may have been unjust; in expiation therefore of these errors, accept my promise not to act with precipitation in this affair, not to suffer myself in future to be guided by pique, or *irritability*; but to wait patiently, without taking any steps in it whatever, the moment when Sir Edgar comes of age, and chooses frankly to declare himself."

Clarentine, tranquillised by this assurance, then quitted her friend to set out on one of her accustomed morning visits to the family at *Mont Repos*.

Madame d'Arzele was at this time involved in much domestic uneasiness. Her children, in the course of the winter, had all three been seized with the measles. The two youngest, at the end of a few weeks, happily recovered: but Eugenie, the eldest, had never, from that time, wholly regained her former strength, and within the last month, particularly, had so cruelly alarmed her mother, by the languor

and feverishness which constantly preyed upon her, and gradually undermined her whole constitution, that after consulting with the physician to whom Lord Welwyn, at the beginning of their illness, had recommended them, she had, at last, determined, for a short time, to try change of air, and remove to some little village nearer the sea-coast. At the same moment, however, she acknowledged with a forced smile, that her finances not being in a very flourishing condition, having resolutely and constantly rejected all such donations from Lord Welwyn as were wholly pecuniary, she was under some difficulty with regard to the expenses this little journey would unavoidably involve her in: "I expect a small supply, however," continued she, more gaily, "next week from a friend in town, to whom I lately sent some drawings of the Chevalier's, and some work of my own to dispose of, and the instant that arrives, I hope to set out. He is now actually gone to Sidmouth, to look about in its vicinity for some cheap and eligible lodging for us; and when you entered, my dearest Clarentine, I was writing to Lady Julia an account of my intention, and its motive."

Clarentine, affected by this candid statement of her friend's embarrassments, and extremely desirous of exempting her from the painful necessity of deferring a plan, her maternal solicitude rendered her so anxious to accomplish, now besought her most earnestly to receive from her, in consideration of their near relationship, that assistance she had rejected from Lord Welwyn. A friend, she added, had enabled her by his liberality to make the offer; an offer, which, if upon condition Madame d'Arzele would honour her by accepting, she would accompany with a promise of attending her to Sidmouth, or if she could not immediately be spared, of following her thither, as soon as Lady Delmington gave her permission.—

“ You will want, dearest Madam,” continued she, “ some one to support, to cheer, to assist you in the task of attending upon your sick child ; and who ought you sooner to choose than her, who loving you with such affection, and feeling so deeply interested in all that concerns you, will take so much pleasure in the office ? ”

Madame d’Arzele listened to this truly friendly proposal with streaming eyes, and upon Clarentine’s renewing her entreaties, at length, *in part*, accepted it. Rejoicing in her success, and as prompt in executing, as in planning any purpose of benevolence, Clarentine then took leave, in order to hasten home, and solicit that approbation she was so anxious to obtain.

CHAPTER III.

IT was so late when Clarentine reached home, that on her entering the dining-room, she found the whole family ready to sit down to table. It was not, therefore, till evening she had an opportunity of speaking to her aunt upon the subject that now wholly engrossed her.

Lady Delmington, but too sensible of the inveterate and hourly increasing prejudices Mrs. Harrington had conceived against her unoffending niece, and, consequently, by no means sorry to embrace so good an opportunity of removing them from each other, made no difficulty in complying with Clarentine’s request.—She offered to furnish her with a sufficient supply of money for the journey, and proposed paying regularly for her board during her absence. To this, however, Clarentine, averse to hoarding her little treasure in secrecy any longer, warmly, but gratefully objected, acquainting her aunt, at the same time,

with the generosity of young Somerset, and the use his noble gift was now destined to answer. Lady Delmington applauded her friendly purpose; expressed the kindest anxiety respecting the recovery of her little favourite, and encouraging her to hasten as much as possible so desirable an expedition, left her, to rejoin Mrs. Harrington and Lady Julia.

At ten, a note arrived from Lord Welwyn, soliciting the pleasure of seeing the whole family to dinner the next day. Lady Delmington, with the approbation of Mrs. Harrington, accepted the invitation, and wrote an answer to that effect, which she sent back by his Lordship's messenger.

The next day, however, Mrs. Harrington complaining of indisposition, and feeling by no means inclined, either from habitual civility, or natural good-humour, to sacrifice the slightest personal indulgence to the gratification of others, very bluntly declared—notwithstanding she therefore reduced her polite hostess to the necessity of staying at home herself, or of leaving one of her daughters behind—she was determined to give up her engagement. The young people, upon this, well knowing how disagreeable to Lady Delmington would be a whole day spent *tete-a-tete* with such a companion, all offered to supply her place. She was too indulgent, however, to listen to their intreaties; and consequently, at the appointed hour, Lady Julia, Clarentine, and her two cousins, set out for Welwyn Park.

Among those who formed a part of the company they were introduced to, was a Mr. Eltham, a nephew of Lord Welwyn's, just arrived from London. This young man, born to a splendid fortune, already emancipated from every species of controul, and now rendered by circumstances, sole heir to all his uncle's landed property, was as remarkable for the elegance of his figure as the fire and animation of his ever-dauntless countenance. Possessing all the boldness

and intrepidity that conscious independence and impunity can confer, he could vie, though yet scarcely more than two and twenty, with the oldest practitioners in extravagance, folly, and dissipation. His manners were easy, gay, and careless; his conversation, when he wished to please, spirited, and entertaining; and his understanding, however wild and flighty, naturally quick, penetrating, and brilliant.

From the time Clarentine, who, unfortunately, was placed opposite to him, took her seat at table, he scarcely, for a moment, fixed his eyes on any other object. Her beauty, it was evident, had excited his utmost admiration; and the unaffected modesty of her countenance, where no shame-faced bashfulness appeared to deform the native ingenuousness of its expression; the elegant simplicity of her manners, and the graceful symmetry of her form—his utmost astonishment.

Who she could be—or how, in such a secluded situation, she had acquired so distinguished a superiority, it was not easy to imagine. When she entered, being engaged in conversation with another gentleman, he had not heard her name, and therefore was yet doubtful whether she formed a part of the Delmington family, or was only an occasional visitor at their house. Impatient to obtain fuller information, he seized the first opportunity, after she had left the room with the other ladies, of questioning Sir Edgar upon the subject.

“Allow me to ask, Sir,” said he, “whether that lady whom you sat next at dinner was any relation of yours?”

Sir Edgar answered, that she was.

“Is her name Delmington?”—“Yes, sir.”—
“Does she live with you?”—“Yes, Sir.”—“Pray then is she an orphan?”

Edgar never very tolerant of any thing that in the slightest degree bordered upon impertinence, and

particularly provoked at being so freely interrogated respecting Clarentine, affected not to hear this last question, but turned away, and addressed himself to his next neighbour.

Eltham, however, was not of a temper to be so easily discouraged. He now therefore openly applied to Lord Welwyn himself, and speaking to him across the table—

“I must beg, my Lord,” cried he, “that you would indulge me with some account of the young lady who went last out of the room. Is it true, that she has been buried all her life in the dismal solitude of an old country mansion, unseen, unknown, and doomed to pine in obscurity and neglect?”

Lord Welwyn laughed. “The dismal solitude,” answered he, “of that old country mansion, you would, I believe, with such a companion, be very happy to find yourself condemned to. You are mistaken, however, if you suppose she is either *neglected* or *unknown*. Her goodness, her accomplishments and beauty, have all rendered her an object of universal admiration; and I meet with no one who has ever conversed with her, who does not equally respect and love her.”

“Ah, my Lord!” cried Eltham, “beware lest you praise her with too much enthusiasm! that captivating, that bewitching face requires not the aid of so eloquent a panegyrist!”

“Her face,” returned Lord Welwyn, “constitutes one of her least perfections. She is chiefly to be valued for the qualities of her heart, the undeviating truth and rectitude of her character. She has spent much of her time here with my daughter, and given me the fairest opportunity of studying her disposition, and appreciating her real worth! Invariably, and constantly has she proved herself upright, and pure of intention; affectionate, and gentle of mind; fixed, and steady of principle!”

"Dear my lord," exclaimed Eltham, "that you would but take *my* eulogium in hand! You paint in such glowing colours, that the vilest subject might gain beauty from your touch."

"Wait," replied his Lordship, smiling, "till we are called to tea, and in presence of the fair Clarentine, I will undertake the task."

"I distrust you a little, my Lord;" cried Eltham, "but will, however, abide by the consequences, and accept the proposal."

Soon after, the expected summons arrived, and the gentlemen all readily repaired to the drawing-room.

Clarentine on their entrance, was sitting with Sophia at a window, in earnest conversation. Lord Welwyn, followed by his nephew, went up to her and addressing her with a good humoured smile—

"My dear young lady," said he, "I am commissioned by this gentleman to renew his introduction to you; he fears that during the bustle of the general presentation that took place before dinner, you may have overlooked him, and much wishes to be more particularly made known to you. Are you, at this moment, at leisure to attend to me?"

Clarentine half-laughing, bowed, and answered—

"Certainly, my lord."

"Why then," resumed his Lordship, "George Eltham, Esq. approach and hear your birth, parentage, and education minutely discussed. He was born, Miss Delmington, in the year, 17—, of a father who, dying when he was only five years old, left him heir to an immense estate; at nine, he was sent to Westminster school; at 17 to Oxford; three years after to the continent; and here he now stands, just returned from Italy, as finished a coxcomb, and as complete a *man of the world*, as I ever had the honour of being acquainted with. Moreover, till within this last twelvemonth, he was my ward, and claims the privilege of calling me uncle."

Eltham, at the conclusion of this *animated encomium*, felt, notwithstanding all his effrontery, something like embarrassment. He attempted however to disguise it under a forced laugh; and turning upon his heel, sauntered towards the tea-table, and threw himself into a chair next Lady Julia.

Meanwhile, Clarentine and Sophia, extremely amused, both exclaimed the moment Lord Welwyn paused—

“A very inviting character indeed!”

“O, you know not yet,” cried his Lordship, “half its merits! He can drink hard, play high, fight desperately. Every new face he sees turns his head; every artful designer preys upon his fortune. In love and friendship he is equally a dupe! yet, with the same folly, few, perhaps, are possessed of so much openness and undisguised extravagance as my graceless nephew. No hypocrisy, no dissimulation covers the multitude of *his* sins. They are all plain as the day, and public as the sun!”

“My Lord,” said Sophia, “if he takes so little pains to conceal his faults, you have at least the comfort of knowing he will seduce no one else into their practice. A character so thoughtless, must be incapable of employing any artifices in order to misguide others.”

“The contagion of example, my dear Sophia,” replied his Lordship, “is perhaps quite as dangerous as the force of precept. Where there is youthful gaiety, spirit, generosity, and courage, much will be overlooked, much pardoned, and I fear, much imitated. Thousands are at first sight dazzled by the brilliant exterior of an agreeable profligate, who never would have listened, for an instant, to the fallacious logic of premeditated seduction. Eltham, setting aside his morals, is the pleasantest creature I ever knew, and has a fund of humour, originality, and good-nature, rarely to be equalled. Can you imagine then, he wants either subtlety, or argument to mislead?”

Here Clarentine being called upon by Lady Julia to assist her in making tea, the conversation was interrupted, and Lord Welwyn rejoined his other guests.

"Mr. Eltham," said Lady Julia, as Clarentine advanced, "is extremely desirous of knowing what you and my father have been talking about. He insists upon it, *he* was the sole subject of your long conference."

"Could Mr. Eltham," cried Clarentine, "indeed suspect this, and yet want courage to listen to what was said of him."

"I sustained the *first* shock so ill," replied he, "that, to my shame be it acknowledged, I had not resolution sufficient to stand a second."

"You were then taken by surprise," cried Lady Julia, laughing, "since otherwise, it would not have been found an easy matter to have disconcerted *you* so soon. A few animadversions upon your conduct, or a brief recital of two or three of the charming anecdotes that have reached my father's ears respecting you, are not things of such consequence as to confound, or abash, a man of so much intrepidity. They are rather calculated to excite your vanity, as so many proofs of your gallantry and spirit."

"*Et tu, Brute?*" cried Eltham reproachfully, "upon my soul, this is not fair! Be content, my gentle Coz, with the inhuman mortifications I have already endured, and rather seek to re-establish, than to sink me yet lower, in your friend's good opinion."

Then turning to Clarentine, after a short pause, "Will Miss Delmington," said he smiling, "permit me to ask what she conceives to be the actual meditations of the gentleman now standing at that farthest window? His *eyes* seem to have found a pleasant resting place, but where may his *thoughts* be wandering?"

Clarentine, starting at this speech, raised her head,

and looked towards the spot he had alluded to. There she beheld Sir Edgar Delmington, leaning over the back of a chair, and stedfastly observing her with a stern and angry countenance; whilst Sophia, unconscious of the total disregard with which he heard her, was gaily repeating the conversation that had just passed between Lord Welwyn and Clarentine.

Shocked, and astonished, at being made an object of such gloomy contemplation, Clarentine instantly arose, and hastening towards him with the most anxious solicitude, besought him to tell her what was the matter; why he looked so disturbed; and why, when every one else was engaged in conversation, and seemed cheerful and happy, he alone preserved an air of such thoughtfulness and discontent?

"You are not offended with any body, dear Edgar?" continued she, "are you?"

Gratified, and soothed by the kindness of her enquiries, yet ashamed of acknowledging the real cause of his uneasiness, Sir Edgar's countenance immediately assumed a gentler expression, and with a sort of serious smile, he answered,

"No, my dearest Clarentine, not now. You have restored me to good humour."

"But what," cried she, looking earnestly at him, "originally disturbed you?"

Without answering this question, he extended to her his hand, with an air that seemed to solicit her forgiveness, but upon her reproachfully refusing to accept it, affected an appearance of careless indifference, and leaving her with Sophia, walked up to Lord Welwyn, and the other gentlemen.

Clarentine looked after him as he crossed the room, and shrugging her shoulders, exclaimed, "You have a strange brother, my poor Sophia! He really becomes more unreasonable and more irritable every day! It is impossible to depend upon him a moment, for whe-

ther grave or gay, his mirth and his sadness seem equally to result from whim and caprice !”

“ I cannot dispute it,” said Sophia, “ though I must honestly confess I understood not one word that either of you uttered. How came you to know he was angry ? *I* did not even suspect it.”

“ You did not look at him then,” said Clarentine.

“ No, I was too busily engaged in telling my own story, to watch, very narrowly, every change of his countenance. Besides, I always think it time enough to know that people are angry when they tell me so, and never take pains to find it out by their looks. What they *say* is all that concerns me ; what they *think* it is seldom worth our while to investigate.”

Clarentine agreed to the truth of this, but to account for her too-apparent readiness in making such discoveries, repeated to her Mr. Eltham’s sarcastic observation, as having first directed her attention towards Sir Edgar ; and ended, by declaring with some warmth, that she was sincerely rejoiced at the prospect she had of quitting Delmington for a short time, since, whilst Mrs. Harrington resided there ; and Edgar was so inexplicably gloomy, and unlike his former self, she had lost all hope of enjoying any degree of happiness or comfort.

Before Sophia, who seemed much hurt by this speech, had time to answer it, Lady Julia sent Mr. Eltham to summon them both to the card table. Clarentine, very little used to playing, and at all times particularly averse to it, immediately excused herself upon the plea of ignorance, and intreated Sophia, who was rising, to follow Mr. Eltham, to apologise to Lady Julia for her.

As soon as they were gone, taking up a candle that was placed near the door, she stole unperceived out of the room, and knowing perfectly the disposition of every apartment in the house, hastened down to the library. There, seating herself at the table, she se-

lected from a number of books which were scattered over it the charming poem, entitled "the Pleasures of Memory," and soon forgot, in the delight with which she perused it, the momentary chagrin she had experienced.

From this interesting employment she was presently disturbed by the sound of approaching footsteps in the adjoining room ; she listened attentively, when, equally to her surprise and vexation, the door was suddenly thrown open, and Mr. Eltham appeared.

Affecting an air of astonishment as he approached her, " Good God, Miss Delmington," exclaimed he, " how long have you been here ? I left every body in the drawing-room wondering at your absence, and in pain for you lest you should be ill."

" It is time then," said Clarentine, who from the moment of his entrance had risen, and now advanced towards the door, " I should, by returning, put an end to their conjectures,"

" First," cried he, attempting to take her hand, " tell me you forgive this intrusion, and shew me what book you were reading."

" You will find it upon the table," said she, again advancing forward, " and as you do not play this evening, I would recommend it to your perusal."

" But stay with me then, Miss Delmington," cried he, " and whilst they are all so earnestly engaged above, let us read it together."

" What ! and leave every body in such pain about my health ?" cried Clarentine smiling: " O no, Mr. Eltham, you cannot wish it, I am sure."

So saying, as he had no farther pretence to withhold her, she immediately left the room, and soon found herself beyond his reach, and quietly seated by the side of Lady Julia.

To the numerous questions that were now asked her, concerning her sudden disappearance, she made such slight answers, as in a very short time prevented

further enquiries ; and finding soon after that Eltham, who was already returned, and it was plain had merely left the room in pursuit of her, sat the only disengaged person present except herself, and anxiously sought to draw her into conversation, she determined, in order to free herself from his attentions, to propose playing also, when it would be impossible for him to attach himself to her, more particularly than to any one else.

For this purpose, at the beginning of a new deal, she begged Harriet and Sophia would make room for her between them, and requested permission to join in the game. Glad to increase their number, as at what they were playing, they were at liberty to admit as many as they chose, they immediately consented, and accordingly she took her place, fully resolved not to quit it till the whole party broke up.

Eltham, by this manœuvre, left totally to his own inventions, and but ill skilled apparently in the happy art of abstracting his thoughts in a large company from surrounding objects, to direct them solely towards such points as were likely to afford him amusement from within, soon grew weary of the comparative solitude of his situation, and once more abruptly rising, went back to the library, where he remained till lady Delmington's carriage drove to the door.

Hastily passing Lady Julia, whom on his return to the drawing-room he met going down stairs, conducted by Sir Edgar, he advanced eagerly towards Clarentine, and assisting her in putting on her cloak, took her hand, and leading her forward, said, " Well, Miss Delmington, I have been looking into the charming poem you recommended to me, and am extremely pleased with it. If, as I imagine you have not yet concluded it, I will do myself the honour of bringing it to you to-morrow morning."

" I beg you would not give yourself so much

trouble, Sir," said Clarentine, "Lady Julia will perhaps send for it herself, and then"—

"My dear Madam," interrupted he laughing, "it were vain for you to attempt opposing my intrusion at your house, since, independent of the pleasure I shall have in paying my respects to Lady Deimington and yourself, I have yet another apology for my visits, in the person of Lady Julia, to whom my near relationship entitles me, in some measure, to become an occasional tormentor as long as my residence in her vicinity admits it. You find, therefore, that your case is desperate. Arm yourself then with patience and resignation."

Then putting her into the carriage, and wishing her good-night, he made a general bow to the rest of the party, and ran back into the house.

During their ride home, Clarentine, who could not forbear laughing at the singularity of his last speech, repeated it to Lady Julia, and at the same time gave her some account of what had passed between them in the library. This recital at once explained to them all his reasons for refusing to play; and led them afterwards, in a strain of good-humoured raillery, to congratulate Clarentine upon the conquest she had made.

"A conquest, however," cried Sophia, "not to be very confidently relied upon, I fear, if Lord Welwyn's report, at least, is to be credited. I am really sorry for it; his vivacity delights me, and I should be extremely pleased with such a relation. Try whether you cannot fix him, Clarentine; it would be laying us all under the highest obligations; for, if he staid in the country, how enchantingly would he enliven our winter parties!"

"With such favourable dispositions towards him," answered Clarentine, "you are more likely than any other to succeed yourself. By all means therefore, let me advise you to make the experiment."

"O, *me?* why, my dear girl, he paid me no more attention than if I had not been in the room, and scarcely looked at me the whole day."

"So much the better," said Clarentine, "you may conclude therefore that his neglect was accidental, and arose rather from his own want of penetration, than your want of attractions."

"Very true," cried Sophia, affecting great satisfaction at this encouraging speech, "I did not think of that before. You are a clever girl, Clarentine; and I give you infinite credit for the justice of the remark. To-morrow then, if this uncourteous knight deigns to honour us with a visit, I may hope, (*you* absent however, and *myself* set off, to the best advantage) to make a greater impression upon him!—aye, that will do extremely well: and I shall be *almost* as well pleased as if any other had won the day."

Thus did this light-hearted and happy girl run on till the carriage stopped, when bidding her companions compose their countenances, that Mrs. Harrington might not be shocked by too great an appearance of gaiety, they alighted, and gravely proceeded towards the supper room.

Lady Delmington, who was reading aloud when they entered, received them with her accustomed cordiality and kindness; But Mrs. Harrington, an adept in the illiberal art of misconstruing appearances, instantly observing, notwithstanding her endeavours to conceal it, an uncommon tendency to risibility in Sophia's face, drily remarked, as soon as they sat down, that she was glad to perceive their concern for those they had left at home did not seem at all to have affected their spirits, at least, if she might judge by the happy unconcern that shewed itself in their countenances.

"Dear ma'am," said Sophia giddily, "I am sure that did not contribute to enliven us; I dare say we none of us ever thought of the matter. I hope howe-

ver, added she, "you find yourself better this evening?"

Though uttered hastily, without reflection, and without design, this unfortunate speech put the finishing stroke to poor Sophia's disgrace. Mrs. Harrington's remonstrances upon it were pointed and severe; even Clarentine and Harriet were not exempted from her displeasure: but, though they had both observed the strictest silence from the moment of their entrance, found themselves unexpectedly involved in it, merely for having omitted, when they came in, the ceremonious and insignificant etiquette of enquiring how she did before they ventured to seat themselves.

So long, and so tedious were her reproaches upon this subject, that Lady Julia, utterly unaccustomed to such lectures, and wearied beyond measure at its duration, rung for her woman before it was half over, and curtsying in silence to Lady Delmington, hastened to her own room.

Not daring to follow her example, the ill-fated trio, now oppressed and saddened, sat down to supper as soon as she was gone, and though all appetite was lost, and to eat was out of the question, preserved a tolerable good countenance till the cloth was removed, and they were released by the welcome sound of the great house clock, which at length struck the hour at which they were wont to retire.

CHAPTER IV.

THE next morning, Clarentine, by no means thinking herself under any obligation to remain at home on Mr. Eltham's account, and feeling indeed, far from anxious to appropriate to herself any part of the honour his visit might be intended to confer, walked

to *Mont-Repos*, as soon as breakfast was over, to enquire whether the Chevalier de Valcour was returned, and what had been the success of his expedition.

He met her at the door with his hat on, upon the very point of setting out for Delmington himself. They both entered the parlour together, where, in presence of Madame d'Arzele, he gave her the detail for which she was so anxious.

In the first place he told her, that, at the distance of about half a mile from Sidmouth, he had discovered a farm-house very pleasantly situated, in which were two ready-furnished bed-chambers and a parlour, that might immediately be hired upon the most reasonable terms (including the use of the kitchen) either by the week or month, which ever suited best. He next informed her that the little supply for which Madame d'Arzele had waited, arrived the preceding evening, and that consequently nothing now remained but for Clarentine to fix the time when it would be most convenient for her to set out.

"O let it not rest upon that," cried she earnestly, "my time is Madame d'Arzele's. Whenever, therefore, her dear little girl is able to bear the removal, I am at her command."

"Then, my best Clarentine," said that Lady, "as I am now extremely anxious to avoid all further delay, we will begin our journey, if you please, the day after to-morrow. The Chevalier will see us safe to our place of destination; and then returns to spend the period of my absence at Lord Welwyn's, who this morning, sent him the most pressing and cordial invitation to that purpose. My *femme de chambre* will go with us; the other maid remains here to take care of the house."

This point being settled, Clarentine embraced the three children, and bidding Madame d'Arzele an affectionate farewell, left the house, and escorted by the Chevalier, directed her steps homewards.

As their road lay directly between Welwyn Park and Delmington, it appeared extremely probable to Clarentine that either in his way to or from the last mentioned place, she might meet Mr. Eltham. Neither anxious, however, to avoid such a meeting, nor to promote it, she walked quietly on, preparing herself to expect it, yet perfectly indifferent whether it took place or not.

In this disposition of mind, she reached home without any molestation, secretly congratulating herself upon that, which, notwithstanding all her philosophy, she could not help regarding as an escape ; and followed by the Chevalier, joined the usual party in the great parlour.

She had scarcely had time to deliver Madame d'Arzele's compliments, and apologies for not calling before she went, and to announce to Lady Delmington the plan that had been agreed upon, when the door opened, and Mr. Eltham was announced.

He was accompanied by Sir Edgar, who came, he said, to beg his room might be prepared for him to sleep in the following night, as the next day he was going with Mr. Eltham to dine at a gentleman's house in the neighbourhood, at which he expected to be detained so late, that, fearful of disturbing Lord Welwyn by returning at such an hour, he meant not to go back to his house till the morning after.

"A very prudent plan indeed !" cried Lady Delmington, "and why, my dear Edgar, should you consent to stay so late ?"

"O, the nights are very light now," cried Eltham, "and I'll engage, should Sir Edgar find himself at all embarrassed, to guide him home in perfect safety."

"Why *you* don't propose to sleep here too ?" said Lady Julia, "do you ?"

"Certainly not," answered he, "I have not the presumption to imagine I should be admitted : but to

quiet Lady Delmington's apprehensions, I would gladly escort Sir Edgar hither, even at the risk of being shut out of my own resting-place."

"And, where, may I ask, will *be* your resting-place, Sir?" said Lady Delmington smiling.

"At the inn at Lyston, Madam," answered he.

"Why then Edgar," resumed her Ladyship, "I think that had better be *yours* also. I am not at all more desirous of having my house disturbed in the middle of the night than Lord Welwyn can be; and since you both seem disposed to conform to the same hours, you may surely both conform to the same accommodations."

"Alas! Madam," cried Eltham, "I fear, reasonable as this plan is, it cannot be put in execution. My hopes of securing a bed for myself were at one time so forlorn, that I was very near coming to supplicate for one here, as well as Sir Edgar. I should have had *Lady Julia's* interest, I am sure; and was persuaded I might rely upon *her* seconding my petition most earnestly."

Lady Julia shook her head, and laughed, but made no answer: and Sir Edgar addressing his mother, said, "What Mr. Eltham tells you, madam, is really the case. We have been to Lyston this very morning; but found the town so amazingly filled, owing to the fair, which is now held there, that it was impossible to procure more than one bed."

"Well then," said Lady Delmington, "your room shall be prepared: but I hope, my dear Edgar, you will not make it a practice to keep such intolerable hours, for they are extremely disagreeable to me."

"Blame Mr. Eltham, Madam," cried Lady Julia, "since I have not any doubt but that it was he who seduced Sir Edgar into forming this horrid engagement. Confess the truth honestly," continued she, "and tell us whether it is not so?"

Eltham was beginning an answer, when the entrance

of Mrs. Harrington, whom he had never before seen, put a stop to it; and going round to Clarentine, who sat at work at a little table near the window, he leaned over the back of her chair, and said in a low voice, "Who is that petrifying memento of mortality? that fearful representative of every evil propensity concentrated?"

Clarentine started, and asked whom he meant?

"O, trust me," cried he, "I don't know her name, and I almost wonder I should *wish* to know it; but tell me, the antique personage who just came in—who is she?"

"Do you wish to be introduced to her?"

"If that is a necessary ceremony, yes, certainly. I wish to be well with every member of this family."

Clarentine then beckoned to Sophia, and in the same low voice said, "Mr. Eltham wishes to be presented to Mrs. Harrington, will you undertake the office?"

"With all my heart," answered Sophia, "I have an excellent memory, and remember the whole of what Lord Welwyn said yesterday upon a similar occasion, not one word of which I will omit."

"Oh, the D—l!" exclaimed Eltham, "you'll ruin me! Talk of prodigality and dissipation to such a stern old lady as that? You'll undo me!"

"Surely," said Sophia, "you cannot expect me to be more lenient than your uncle!"

"And why not?" cried he laughing, "Lord Welwyn himself believed not one word he uttered; he saw I was captivated by the sight of so much beauty;" bowing to them both, "and fearful of the consequences, described me in such uncharitable terms merely to preserve you from being too much fascinated by my extraordinary merit."

"Lord Welwyn was very good," said Sophia, "but really I don't think we were in any danger."

"Ah, believe me, you deceive yourselves. I never met with a woman yet, (such only as that good

lady," looking at Mrs. Harrington, "excepted) who did not think me irresistible!"

"Or, at least," said Sophia drily, "the quintessence of *modesty*."

"Aye," cried he, "that is one of my principal excellencies. I carry it even to an excess, and am accused by many people of absolute *bashfulness*. But," continued he, "if I am not mistaken I had best depart, for your friend there," again looking at Mrs. Harrington, "seems to regard me with no friendly aspect. It is astonishing how all these ancient ladies tremble, the moment they see me speak to a pretty woman!"

So saying, he looked round for his hat, and was upon the point of taking leave, when Lady Julia called him back.

"Mr. Eltham," cried she smiling, "will you undertake to obtain my father's leave for me to go to Lyston fair this evening? Tell him Lady Delmington has given her daughters permission to go with Sir Edgar, and intreat him to allow me to accompany them."

Eltham promised to perform this commission, and bowing respectfully to Lady Delmington, took Sir Edgar under the arm, and left the room. The Chevalier rose at the same time, and followed them out.

"Who is that bold looking young man?" said Mrs. Harrington the moment he was gone.

"My cousin, Madam," answered Lady Julia gravely.

Mrs. Harrington, a little disconcerted, changed the subject, and soon after telling Lady Delmington she wished to speak to her, they went together into another room.

On their return, a long contention ensued between Mrs. Harrington, Harriet, and Sophia, concerning the projected party to Lyston. Not choosing to attack Lady Julia upon that subject, yet extremely

averse to the scheme's taking place, she had called Lady Delmington out of the room for the sole purpose of urging her to counteract it; her Ladyship having given her positive sanction to it, however, said she could not now recal it; but contented herself with promising, at Mrs. Harrington's earnest persuasion, to oppose Clarentine's going with them.

It was on this prohibition being pronounced, the two sisters, but Sophia in particular, gaining courage from her mother's passive silence, ventured to plead warmly in Clarentine's behalf; Lady Julia also joined to theirs her own intreaties, but in vain. Mrs. Harrington said, it might be very proper for her Ladyship, who was related to Mr. Eltham, and the two Miss Delmingtons, who would be accompanied by their brother, to engage in such an expedition: but, that for Clarentine, as there was no married lady with them, as Mr. Eltham was almost a stranger to her, and Sir Edgar by no means an eligible guardian for her, she thought it would be highly blameable in Lady Delmington to suffer her to go.

Clarentine, though she was by no means the dupe of this affected tenderness for her reputation, was at once too gentle, and too rational, to think it worth while to enter into any argument upon the subject; but thanking Lady Julia, and her two cousins, for their kindness in wishing her to be of their party, said she should return to *Mont-Repos* before the gentleman came back, that no questions might be asked, and spend the evening quietly with Madame d'Arzele.

Lady Delmington, upon this, gave her a look of affectionate approbation; and Mrs. Harrington, with an air of triumph, told her she could not do better.

A little before six, the two gentlemen arrived on horseback, attended by a servant driving Lord Welwyn's *sociable*, which had been sent for the accommodation of the young ladies. Sophia, the instant

they reached the door, ran out to say they were all ready; and the next minute, Lady Julia, Harriet, and the little Emma appeared.

Eltham, as he handed them in, whilst Sir Edgar was talking at the window to his mother, enquired eagerly after Clarentine. She had been gone near half an hour: but Lady Julia thinking it best to prevent the exclamations this intelligence would give rise to, till they were beyond the hearing of Mrs. Harrington, affected for some time not to hear him; and at length, on being urged with redoubled earnestness, carelessly answered, "she is gone on before, but we may perhaps overtake her at the end of the avenue. Drive on, Francis," speaking to the servant.

"No, no, stop!" exclaimed Eltham, "you deceive us Lady Julia. Had she been in the avenue we should have met her as we rode up. Where is she? You cannot possibly mean to set off without her!"

"I assure you," cried Lady Julia, rather impatiently, "she is not in the house. Suffer us to go on, and I will tell you more."

Eltham reluctantly acquiesced, and before Sir Edgar had finished his conversation, or had had leisure to remark that Clarentine was not of their party, the carriage moved on.

The first moment Lady Julia seemed disposed to listen to him, Eltham renewed his interrogations.

"Why so much mystery upon this subject?" cried he, "why were you so averse to answering me sooner?"

"Because," replied Lady Julia, "before Mrs. Harrington, who was observing us from the windows, it would have been highly improper, since, as it was she who prevented Clarentine's going with us, your animadversions would have exasperated her extremely."

This account brought on an innumerable train of further enquiries, as well from Mr. Eltham as Sir

Edgar, whose astonishment at such an act of authority could only be exceeded by his concern for the unsupported Clarentine, and his indignation against the arbitrary proceedings of Mrs. Harrington.

"Bitterly shall we all have cause to lament," cried he, "the hour that first introduced that woman into our family! From its having been one of the most united and happy upon earth, she will render it the most turbulent and wretched; my mother suffers herself to be made her tool, and ever at variance with some individual or other amongst us, nothing in future can be expected but an incessant repetition of paltry wranglings in public, or of determined tyranny in private."

"Well, my dear Edgar," cried Sophia, surprised at the unusual acrimony with which he spoke, "however true all this may be, you have less reason to complain than any of us, since, rarely as you are now at home, your sufferings must be trifling indeed compared to ours."

"Ah!" thought Edgar, "neither is it for myself I feel! My concern is wholly for the defenceless and too submissive Clarentine, who being the chief object against whom all Mrs. Harrington's malice is levelled, must, consequently, be liable to far greater mortifications than any one else!"

Distressing to him as was this idea, he scarcely rallied spirits sufficient to speak again during the whole evening. Eltham and Sophia occasionally addressed each other, and attempted to animate the conversation, but unassisted as they were, their endeavours failed; and this, as most other concerted *parties of pleasure* do, ended in lassitude, insipidity, and disappointment.

As they were returning, a scheme occurred to Eltham which was unanimously agreed to, the moment he mentioned it. This was, to call, in their way to Delmington, at *Mont-Repos*, and there to take up

Clarentine, and carry her on with them. Sir Edgar was so revived by this proposal, which the unpleasant train of reflections he had been thrown into had effectually prevented *his* thinking of, that he no sooner heard it started, than, galloping forward, without stopping to utter a single word, he left them to prepare Clarentine for their approach.

On his entrance into the room where she was sitting, he found her alone, and to his inexpressible astonishment, practising upon the harp a very beautiful composition, which, (among many others Madame d'Arzele had privately taught her in the course of the winter) she had lately begun learning. He paused a moment at the door, in silent amazement; and then eagerly advancing, at the very time she first looked up and perceived him, he exclaimed, "My dearest Clarentine! how do I honour that activity of mind, which thus leads you, though in secrecy and silence, to cultivate those talents you are endowed with. Well might you, who so well know how to employ every hour, be resigned to the harsh prohibition you received; but tell me, how are *we* to acquire equal submission? You know not with what sincerity we have lamented a deprivation we had so little reason to expect."

Clarentine, though surprised at the earnestness of this address, chose not to disclaim the compliment it conveyed, well knowing that was always looked upon as a challenge to continue in the same strain. She therefore, with her accustomed modest simplicity, answered, "You were all very good to think so much about me, and I can assure you I was extremely concerned myself not to be of your party. But pray Edgar, where have you left Lady Julia and your sisters? What brings you here alone?"

Sir Edgar had scarcely time to acquaint her with the motive of her visit, before Eltham, Lady Julia, and her companions appeared. The bustle their ar-

rival occasioned soon brought down Madame d'Arzele from her nursery; and then being extremely pressed to sit down a few minutes, Lady Julia sent home the *sociable*, every body declaring with one voice that as the evening was so beautiful, it would be much pleasanter to walk than ride the remainder of the way.

Chairs being now placed round the table, the three ladies, who last came in, produced, to the great amusement of the whole company, a number of little toys they had purchased as *fairings* for Madame d'Arzele's children. Then turning to Clarentine, Lady Julia with a smile said, as she presented to her a small silver anchor, "This, my dear girl, is the only thing I could meet with that seemed to me to be so well adapted to you. Knowing your passion for sailors, I thought an anchor, as well because it is the emblem of hope, as the representative of that, on which depends the safety of your favourites, might appear of some value to you. Tell me, did I judge right?"

"Yes, perfectly," answered Clarentine, receiving it with a grateful smile; "you could not have bestowed upon me any thing, which for the reasons you mention, I should have thought more precious. In remembrance of you, and of Mr. Somerset, for whose sake chiefly I am so partial to sailors, I will preserve it most carefully."

"Oh, how do I lament," cried Sophia, "since imagination can give so much to whatever reminds us in the remotest degree of an absent friend, my stupidity in not looking out for something that might, during your stay at Sidmouth, have brought to your recollection the inhabitants of Delmington. A *whirligig*, for instance, could never have failed having that effect with regard to Edgar, and—

"How," interrupted Lady Julia, "*a whirligig!* and why so?"

"Bless me! don't you know? Why Edgar, as

Clarentine has justly remarked, has a mutability of disposition, and an uncertainty of temper that cannot be so properly represented by any other symbol."

Clarentine looking up at that moment, and observing in Sir Edgar's countenance, notwithstanding the faint attempt he made to smile, an expression of embarrassment and consciousness, instantly started a new subject, and gave a different turn to the conversation.

Having sat with Madame d'Arzele about half an hour, and being fearful of exciting Mrs. Harrington's ever ready censure by a longer stay, they now all rose to depart. Lady Julia and the two Miss Delmingtons took a very affectionate leave of Madame d'Arzele; the former intreated she might often hear from her, and repeatedly urged her to make her absence as short as possible. Then leaving a thousand kind messages for the children, she led the way and hurried down stairs.

In the entrance they were accosted by the Chevalier, who having spent the evening with Lord Welwyn, was just returned. He insisted upon escorting the ladies home, though already so well attended; and accordingly set out with them.

Dividing themselves into separate parties, each of the gentlemen, either according to inclination or necessity, attached himself to a different lady. Sir Edgar, wholly influenced in his choice, by the *latter* motive, walked by the side of Lady Julia, who, at intervals, with much difficulty, started a momentary conversation; but more generally, suffered him quietly to indulge the taciturn gravity, into which he had once more relapsed. Immediately behind them followed Clarentine and Eltham, the direct contrasts of their two leaders; all the conversation between them, proceeding from the gentleman, and all the desire of silence from the lady. Harriet and Emma, both spiritless and fatigued, walked near them; and last

of all, came Sophia, who with unabated animation was gaily flirting with the Chevalier, and seemed to be the only one present, that was perfectly satisfied with the partner who had fallen to her lot.

Herself excepted, therefore, nobody appeared, when at length, the moment of separating drew near, to lament it. The gentlemen, after seeing them to the end of the avenue, turned back, and left their companions, trembling at the idea of meeting Mrs. Harrington, (for it was near ten o'clock) to frame the best excuses they could for the length of their absence.

Though in her expressions of open disapprobation, that lady, when they appeared, was not so severe as she had been the preceding night, yet the reception of them, upon the whole, was very little pleasanter: that she did not indeed break out into absolute reproaches, could alone be attributed to the expectation she had, that lady Delmington would do it herself, on account of little Emma, whose usual hour of going to rest being now considerably past, had consequently rendered her extremely uneasy at their delay.

Lady Julia, anxious to save her friends, took the whole blame upon herself, the moment Lady Delmington's mild, but serious, rebuke began. She said nothing of their visit to *Mont-Repos*, leaving it to be supposed, they met with Clarentine, by accident: but accused herself of having been the sole cause of detaining them so long at Lyston, and interceded most earnestly for a general pardon.

Such a pleader, even Mrs. Harrington chose not to withstand. All anger therefore was soon forgotten, and an unwonted degree of serenity and cheerfulness prevailed during the remainder of the evening.

CHAPTER VI.

THE following day, till near dinner time, Clarentine was busily employed in preparing for her journey, that she might be ready the next morning when Madame d'Arzele, who must necessarily drive past the door, called to take her up.

As this occupation, therefore, had kept her in her own room so many hours, Lady Julia, who was desirous of having a little quiet conversation with her before she went, took the first opportunity, after they arose from table, of proposing to her a short walk in the garden. Clarentine willingly agreed to it, and they quitted the room together.

The extreme heat of the weather, however, soon drove them in, and compelled them once more to return to the parlour; where whilst Harriet read aloud, the rest sat down to work, or draw, near the window.

The clock had just struck ten, and they were upon the point of sitting down to supper, when a tremendous clap of thunder, preceded by several vivid flashes of lightning, startled the whole party, and almost shook the gothic mansion to its foundation. Lady Delmington, though the uncommon sultriness of the day had taught her to expect it, was filled notwithstanding, with consternation and terror, when she reflected upon the danger to which her son might be exposed, returning through a woody country on horseback, in the midst of such a storm.

For near three hours, during which it continued at intervals to rage with unabated violence, neither Lady Delmington nor her two daughters, quitted the parlour. Clarentine would gladly have remained with them, but her aunt, apprehending that if Emma awoke she would be frightened, begged she would go up, and sit with her. Lady Julia followed, and

for some time continued with her; but at length growing extremely sleepy, and not being infected with any fears herself, she bade her good night, and retired to her own room.

It was near two o'clock before Sir Edgar came home; he seemed extremely surprised to find his mother and sisters up at such an hour; but when he heard the cause, though he derided their alarm, he also thanked them for their anxiety, and besought them earnestly not to remain below a moment longer. Lady Delmington, fatigued and harassed as she was, in mind, as well as body, readily followed his advice, and rejoicing in his safety, called to her daughters, and left the room. Harriet immediately joined her: but just as Sophia reached the door, her brother brought her back by a motion of his head, and leading her to the table, said—

“Sophia, I am the happiest fellow upon earth! Behold,” taking out his purse, and shaking it as he spoke, “what propitious Fortune has sent me. I have been playing to-night, and in less than two hours, won near an hundred guineas! to-morrow I redeem my watch, my books, and every thing I had parted with.”

“A very honourable method,” said Sophia, drily, “of acquiring money for such a purpose!”

“Nay, do not chide me,” cried he; “I resisted playing, till being the only one that sat out, I could resist no longer. Some guardian angel, at length, prompted me to the deed—some blessed spirit, that saw, and pitied my distress!”

“I should have thought,” cried Sophia, “that angels [and spirits had been wiser! This lowers my opinion of their understanding extremely; I am glad, however, for your sake, they have so little brains; and heartily wish you good night.”

“Stop one minute,” cried he, laughing, “you must inform Clarentine of this event. Why did she not sit up with you?”

"Because perhaps, she had a *presentiment* of all the extravagances she might hear."

"She is really gone to bed, then?"

"I imagine so; but am not sure."

Sir Edgar said no more, and the next minute Sophia left him.

As soon as he concluded she had reached her own room, he cautiously directed his steps towards the gallery, at the end of which Clarentine slept, and certain of not being heard, as no one else occupied that part of the house, knocking at the door. No answer being returned, and no sound, save that of the thunder still rolling at a distance, reaching his ears, he began to fear she was actually gone to bed. Determined to make one more trial, however, he waited a few minutes, and then knocking again, heard her, at length, in a tone of terror and affright, ask who was there?

"Me," answered Edgar—"are you dressed? Will you come down?"

"Come down?" repeated she, "at this time of night?"

"It is not so late as you imagine," answered he, "I will not detain you five minutes: but I must see, I must speak to you."

"Indeed, Edgar, you cannot—what will your mother say to me for leaving Emma?"

"Emma is asleep, is she not?"

"Yes."

"Then you *must* come. My mother is in the parlour, and sent me to call you."

In any other situation of mind, Sir Edgar would have started at the bare idea of uttering such a falsehood; but his head was not at that time entirely his own. Flushed with drinking, and elevated with success, his powers of reflection were totally suspended, and he scarcely felt conscious himself of what he was doing.

Clarentine, in the innocence of her heart, suspected no deceit, but anxious to obey Lady Delmington's supposed summons, softly opened her door, and said she was ready to follow him.

He eagerly seized her extended hand, and as they proceeded, asked her, how long she had been sitting there alone?

"Not so long, perhaps," answered she, "as the horrors of the night made me suppose: but yet a sufficient time to have rendered me quite chill and comfortless."

"Did you bestow a thought upon *me*," said he, "whilst you sat there? Did you participate in my mother's apprehensions for *my* safety? Tell me, dearest Clarentine—for *your* pity, *your* anxiety would more than recompense me for any dangers!"

"I often wished you were at home," answered she, a little startled at the earnestness of his manner, "but did not imagine that to be exposed to any danger of this sort could, for a moment, appal such a spirit as yours."

They had by this time reached the parlour, which Clarentine perceiving to be empty, shrunk back from, and fearfully exclaimed—"What is it you have done, Sir Edgar?—where is Lady Delmington?"

"Be not alarmed," cried he, still endeavouring to draw her forward, "indeed you have nothing to apprehend. I have deceived you, it is true, with regard to my mother's being here: but when you hear my reasons, I am sure you will forgive me. Come in then—if, as I said before, only for five minutes."

"O, no, no, no!" cried she, struggling to get from him, "not for an instant! I would not stay, I would not listen to you to-night for the world!"

"You *must* hear me," returned he, compelling her to advance, "to-morrow you will be gone; this, therefore, is my only time."

Then, seizing the key of the door, and turning it

with precipitation in the lock, he drew it out and put it in his pocket.

Clarentine, aghast at this sight, and looking at him a moment, with mingled astonishment and indignation, forcibly snatched away her hand, and burst into tears.

"Oh! my Clarentine!" exclaimed he, dropping on one knee before her, "what is it you fear? Why this distress? Am I grown hateful to you? Am I no longer the Edgar you formerly trusted with such implicit confidence—you called your brother, your friend? Oh! have you forgot the happy time when mutually pleased to be together"—

"O rise, rise, Sir Edgar!" interrupted Clarentine angrily, "this is not a moment to talk to me in such language; neither would you expose me to the aspersions this ill-timed interview will bring upon me, were you *indeed* the friend you would be thought! Release me instantly therefore, or you will drive me to desperation!"

So saying, she suddenly disengaged herself, and flew towards the bell which she was going to pull with violence, when he ran to her, again seized both her hands, and called out—

"Forbear, dear Clarentine, I beseech you, and patiently consent to hear me; your efforts to escape would all be vain, since no one in the house could hear that bell, were you even to ring it. Its sound reaches no further than the kitchen, and that has long been deserted."

"Well, then, Sir," said Clarentine, with a dignified calmness that totally overawed him, "for the last time, I hope, that I shall ever be compelled to listen to you again—speak—"

Then moving towards the table, she coldly seated herself before it, and leaning her head upon her hands, prepared to hear him without interruption.

Disconcerted, and irresolute, he paused a few mo-

ments, and then drawing the key from his pocket, presented it to her, and said—

“ I commit myself, dearest Clarentine, to your generosity. Take this key, and—if you can have the cruelty, leave me this moment !”

Clarentine, much softened, received it in silence, and for some time retained it in her hand, without having the courage to rise. At length, however, she went towards the door, and said—

“ You must be sensible yourself, Sir Edgar, of the impropriety of a meeting so clandestine as this. I cannot therefore stay ; but if you will tell Sophia what you have to impart to me, she will, after I get to Sidmouth, write to——”

“ Cruel, inhuman girl !” interrupted he impetuously, “ Is *this* all you will grant me ? Are you determined, by flying me so precipitately, to make me repent my folly in giving you the power ? Oh Clarentine ! I thought better of the softness of your disposition, or I had never trusted you with the means of quitting me, till I had *compelled* you to hear me !”

“ Good God !” exclaimed Clarentine, holding the door half open in her hand, “ what is it you would say to me ?”

“ What I cannot, any longer, persuade myself to conceal ; what you must already, in part, suspect ; what I am irrevocably determined shortly to publish to the whole world !”

“ Heavens !” exclaimed Clarentine, trembling, and almost breathless, “ what is it you mean ?”

“ To consecrate my future life to you,” answered he, with vehemence, “ to proclaim aloud my fervent adoration of you, to reverence, to love, to cherish you to my latest breath.”

“ Hush, for shame, Sir !” cried Clarentine, colouring with resentment, “ reserve these protestations for *Lady Julia Leyburne* !”

And then with a look expressive of all the contempt she felt, she would have hurried out of the room.

"This is too much!" exclaimed Sir Edgar, in a voice rendered almost inarticulate by his own emotion. "Dear Clarentine! lovely, yet proud, unmerciful Clarentine! I cannot endure such contemptuous disdain! Talk not to me of Lady Julia Leyburne—By heaven, I swear—"

"Fie, fie, Sir Edgar!" interrupted Clarentine, "this is unmanly, dishonourable, worthless! Lady Julia, it is no secret, is destined to be yours; she is amiable, she is good, and, above all she is my friend! imagine not then, I will quietly submit to the insult you would do us both, by pledging your perjured faith to me, at the very time, (and, with your own consent) your marriage is negotiating with her!—You wrong us equally—you degrade yourself for ever in my opinion, and make me blush to remember the regard I once felt for you!"

"Oh, my Clarentine, condemn me not unheard!" cried he, again withholding her, "the cruelty of my situation is such, as, for a time, to render dissimulation absolutely necessary. I never gave any but a tacit consent to the union proposed; I never attempted to seduce Lady Julia's affection; I have made no promises; signed no articles; in short, have preserved myself as free, as, till I am of age, I have any hopes of being. My mother, had she suspected my attachment to you, would have removed you from my sight; would, perhaps for ever, have torn you from me!"

Here, while the door stood open, the sudden appearance of a light in the hall dismayed the trembling Clarentine, who looking towards it, uttered the name of "Mrs. Harrington," with a faint scream, and gasping for breath, caught hold of the back of a chair for support.

Meanwhile, Sir Edgar, who during the latter part of this conversation had again sunk upon his knee before her, abruptly started up, though not in time to escape the notice of Mrs. Harrington. She now en-

tered, pale with rage, her tall figure wrapt in a long white dressing-gown, and her feeble lamp, flashing an unsteady light at intervals across her face.

"I have *proof* then now," cried she, as soon as she was able to speak, in a voice, that made poor Clarentine shudder, "ocular proof of what I have so long apprehended! Thy arts, vile wretch," addressing Clarentine, "have fully succeeded, and that infatuated boy, seduced by their infernal influence, has fallen into the snare thou hast prepared for him! Go!" continued she, furiously stamping as she spoke, "Go, deceitful Syren! and never may I be blasted by thy sight again!"

All the irascible passions in Edgar's nature were roused by this unwomanly attack. Trembling with indignation; fearless of consequences, and rendered desperate by opposition, he fiercely addressed Mrs. Harrington, and said—

"By what right, by what authority, Madam, do you usurp the privilege of speaking to any of this family in such opprobrious terms? Clarentine is under my mother's protection, is under *mine*? and neither *shall*, nor *deserves* to be insulted by language so outrageous!"

"Grant me patience, heaven!" cried Mrs. Harrington, with increasing vehemence! "Grant me patience to bear this dauntless assurance! Mad boy! be silent, and instantly remove that creature from my sight or I will not answer for the extremities to which my abhorrence of her may drive me!"

Clarentine, who long since had crept towards the door with a view of making her escape, but had hitherto been prevented by Sir Edgar, now, in a low and faltering voice, said, "For mercy, for pity's sake! Sir Edgar, let me pass!"

"Fear nothing, my love," cried he tenderly, "are you not with me? then, who will *dare* molest you? Be comforted, my own Clarentine! be re-assured;

and trust me, what I have so solemnly sworn, I never will retract—the faith I have so voluntarily pledged, I never will recal!”

“Alas!” cried she mournfully, “that faith I wish not to accept—that oath I wish not should be binding! You have ruined, you have destroyed me! My reputation is gone for ever, and I care not now what becomes of me, or how great the shame that awaits me!”

During this time, Mrs. Harrington, finding her power by no means equal to the task she had undertaken, had precipitately left the room, almost unnoticed by the two miserable beings she left behind her.

“You renounce me then!” cried Edgar reproachfully; “now, at the very moment I wish to make my devotion to you public, you coldly, unfeelingly, renounce me, and reject my proffered faith! Oh, Clarentine! I had a right to expect more sensibility from you! I had a right, when willing myself to hazard every thing in order to obtain you, to expect some support from your own firmness!”

“The moment you have chosen, Sir Edgar,” returned Clarentine, “to make your partiality known to me; the ties that already, in honour, bind you—the opposition of your family, and a thousand other reasons, all combine, to determine me at once, to put an end to your hopes. Neither reproaches, importunity nor perseverance, shall ever make me yours; nor shall any circumstances, nor any time, induce me to alter my resolution, since the remembrance of the scene you have involved me in can never be effaced from my mind, nor the artifice and duplicity imputed to me ever be wiped off from my character! Make not, therefore, any attempt to change your mother’s plan; deny not your engagement, insult not Lady Julia, nor offend her father; for I here firmly protest to you, that were they to-morrow to release you; were you privileged to-morrow to offer me your hand,

after what has passed, nothing on earth should prevail upon me to accept it! Justify my conduct, as far as it will bear justification, in this affair: you may do it with truth and honour, and I will thank you for the deed: but when that is over, think of me no more!"

Sir Edgar, thunderstruck at this speech, with an air of mingled pride and sorrow, instantly dropped her hand; and turning silently from her, began walking about the room, in great agitation, without once looking up, or trusting himself to speak to her again.

Clarentine paused a moment at the door to observe him. Her heart almost reproached her for the sufferings she had inflicted; she sighed, and still involuntarily lingered, till hearing a noise above, she softly whispered a parting benediction, and hastened away.

She had not been gone three minutes, when, accompanied by Mrs. Harrington, who had been up stairs on purpose to call her, Lady Delmington entered the room.

Sir Edgar started at their sight, and would have rushed past them without speaking, but his mother gently, yet half-reproachfully calling him back, said—

"Edgar, why should you avoid me? If you have done no wrong, you can fear no remonstrances; and if you *have*, you are too candid not to hear them with impatience!"

Soothed, and calmed, by the mildness of this address, Sir Edgar respectfully approached her, took her hand, and pressing it to his lips, said—

"Ah! dear Madam, spare me to-night! my heart has already been tortured beyond endurance! I am ill, I am extremely disturbed. Suffer me then to leave you now, and in the morning I will attend you as early as you please."

"Upon that condition, my son," answered Lady Delmington, "I willingly release you. Go, my dear boy, and may heaven restore you to happiness and tranquillity."

So saying, she put into his hand a light ; remarked with grief the emotion still depicted in his countenance, and after accompanying him to his own door, took leave of Mrs. Harrington and went back to her room.

CHAPTER VII.

BEFORE six o'clock the next morning, Mrs. Harrington rang for her woman, and sent her to summon Harriet and Sophia to her bed-side.

The instant this message was delivered, Sophia, extremely provoked at being thus disturbed, exclaimed, " Has your mistress no conscience, Mrs. Sutton ? Does she really believe, that after going to bed at past two o'clock we can rise again at six ? Pray tell her it is impossible to think of it ; close the curtain and leave the room."

Then turning round again, she declared she would send no other answer.

Applying next to Harriet—" Well Miss," said the maid, " will *you* attend my mistress ? She told me she had something very particular to say to you, and unless you go to her, she will most likely come to you."

" Was ever any thing so tormenting !" cried Harriet, rubbing her eyes—" What can she want with us ? Sophy, do get up, and step to her a moment ; you can come back and lay down again afterwards, you know."

" Very much obliged to you !" answered Sophy, " the proposal is particularly friendly ! Do, good Mrs. Sutton, pray go away and don't distract us any longer."

" So then," cried Mrs. Sutton, " neither of you will rise ?" " Yes, yes !" answered Harriet, peevishly, " I will.—Go, and tell her so, therefore ; and for heaven's sake, don't let her come to us !"

"No," said Sophia, "I beg you won't; for bad habits are not so soon got rid of."

In a very few minutes, Harriet, in her night-cap and dressing gown, was at Mrs. Harrington's bedside.

Raising herself up the moment she saw her, "Fine doings, child," cried she, "in the house last night! Pray did you hear no noise about three o'clock?"

"No, Madam," answered Harriet, much surprised at this beginning, "what was the matter?"

Mrs. Harrington then entered into an exaggerated detail of all that had passed; spoke of Clarentine in terms of opprobrium the most illiberal; coarsely and unfeelingly accused Lady Delmington of being the indirect cause of her son's ruin, and ended by protesting she would never cease urging her, till Clarentine was finally banished the house.

Harriet, amazed at this recital, was, for some minutes after the loquacious speaker paused, incapable of uttering a word. At length, however, feeling some concern for her brother, she said—

"And what became of poor Edgar when he saw you?"

"What became of him? Why, he behaved with a degree of insolence I never shall forgive; openly espoused the cause of the wretch who has misguided him; and set my remonstrances completely at defiance. Your mother, however, has given me great hopes she will no more permit her henceforward to reside here; she leaves the house in two hours, decidedly, I flatter myself, for life. Go not near her, before she sets off; and give the same caution to Sophia."

Harriet, without making any comment upon what she had heard, was then leaving the room; but at the door Mrs. Harrington called her back.

"Stop, child, stop!" cried she, "you have been told of the projected marriage between your worth-

less brother and Lady Julia Leyburne? I do not despair yet of seeing it accomplished: but for that purpose she must be kept in profound ignorance of all that has past. That wretched girl cannot infatuate him for ever! If we can but remove her entirely from his sight, place her totally beyond his reach, I have not the least doubt of bringing him to his senses. Go then, and be careful you say nothing before Lady Julia that can lead to a discovery!"

Harriet promised obedience, and was at length suffered to depart.

When she got back to her own room, she found Sophia asleep. Her eagerness to impart the wonders she had heard, allowed her not, however, to let her rest undisturbed; the instant she reached the bed-side, throwing the curtains wide open, she exclaimed—

"O, Sophy! I have such news to tell you!"

"News!" said Sophia, yawning, "Is the dear old Harrington going?"

"No, no—but Edgar—you'll never believe what I have to say about him!"

"Has he sold his coat?" cried Sophia—"pawnd his shirt?"

"Nonsense! what an absurd question!"

"Not so absurd, perhaps, as you may imagine! but tell me, what *has* he done?"

"Why, last night," said Harriet, sitting down upon the bed, and assuming all the significant importance of an old village-gossip, "when every body else in the house was asleep, he and Clarentine were discovered together in the parlour."

"What?" interrupted Sophia, eagerly starting up, "What did you say?"

"That in the middle of the night," returned Harriet, "Mrs. Harrington surprised Edgar at Clarentine's feet! that in consequence of this, Clarentine is no more to be permitted to return here, nor even before she goes, to be seen or spoken to by any body!"

"What abominable scandal have you been picking up!" cried Sophia, glowing with indignation—"For shame, Harriet! How can you repeat, with an appearance of so much glee, such paltry tittle tattle? I don't believe a single word of the whole story; and notwithstanding Mrs. Harrington, shall get up and go to poor Clarentine directly.

"You had better not," said Harriet drily, "she strictly forbade it, and ordered me to come and tell you so."

"Till mama forbids it," said Sophia, beginning in haste to rise, "I think myself at liberty to do as I please. If *you* can so easily renounce a near relation, a friend, *I* cannot, nay, *I will not?*"

"So then," said Harriet, "you believe this is entirely my invention?"

"No, I don't, Clarentine and Edgar may have been seen together; may in the middle of the night, disturbed by the thunder, have met in the parlour: but I shall never persuade myself it was any thing except chance that occasioned it. She is a modest, an excellent girl; and would no more consent to a private assignation with him, at such improper hours, than she would fly!"

During this little dialogue, having dressed herself with the utmost expedition, she was moving towards the door, when it was suddenly opened, and Lady Delmington, pale and breathless, appeared—

"My dear girls," cried she, throwing herself into a chair "your brother—my unhappy Edgar, is ill—very ill!"

The two girls started and flew to her.

"Dear Madam," cried Sophia, "have you sent for any body? Oh, let me go to him!"

"No, no, my love!" exclaimed her mother, alarmed at this proposal, "his disorder may be infectious! go not near his room till the physician has seen him; I have sent for one from Lyston."

"How did you know he was ill, Madam?" said Harriet, "have you seen to him?"

"Yes, I sent my woman up, a quarter of an hour ago, to desire he would let me speak to him before breakfast; she brought me word down he was unable to rise, and to all appearance was extremely ill. I instantly hastened to him, and found him in a burning fever, motionless, and quite insensible! The housekeeper is sitting by him during my absence, and I am now impatiently expecting the arrival of the physician."

"Alas! dear Madam," cried Sophia in a voice of supplication, "and are we, in addition to our concern on Edgar's account, to be utterly forbidden the sight of Clarentine before she goes? Is it true she has so deeply offended you?"

"My Sophia," answered Lady Delmington, "she has less offended than grieved me. I know not how to act with regard to her, how to dispose of, how to behave to her. She has involved us all in the cruellest perplexity; made your brother miserable; and sullied her own character. Yet, still I cannot forget she was your father's niece; cannot forget her youth, her inexperience; nor the blame I myself deserve, for having exposed her to a trial she was so unequal to. Where I can place her, heaven only knows! If you very much wish it, however, you may see, and take leave of her, though I cannot."

Sophia, in token of gratitude for this permission, silently kissed her mother's hand, and ran out of the room.

On entering that of Clarentine, she was surprised to find it already deserted, and with much vexation was turning back, when, as she passed the dressing table, a sealed note, directed to her, caught her eye. She took it up, and breaking it open, found in it these words:

MISS SOPHIA DELMINGTON.

“Before my dearest Sophia reads this note, I shall have left the house. I cannot encounter disgrace, nor am I sufficiently hardened to defy contempt. Of all I leave behind me, you alone do I dare address, for you alone will credit me perhaps, when I solemnly plead, *not guilty!* Appearances may be against me: but the heart of my Sophia, I am persuaded, never will. Think of me, therefore, as kindly as you can, and write to me if you are allowed. Adieu. Heaven bless you!”

This unaffected note, in which no attempt was made to excite compassion, no weak lamentations poured forth, and no bitterness of complaint indulged, gave Sophia the utmost pleasure; and would have been alone sufficient, had she not already in her own mind exculpated her friend, to have convinced her that the person who could write so temperately at such a moment, must be supported by an internal consciousness of rectitude, and a firm persuasion of her own innocence.

Meeting Emma upon the stairs, she asked her how long Clarentine had been gone?

“Not a quarter of an hour,” answered the child; “Madame d’Arzele came for her sooner than she expected: but as she never had her clothes off the whole night, and only lay down a little while on the outside of the bed, she was ready in a moment.”

Then lowering her voice with an air of mystery, she added,

“I don’t know what was the matter, but she cried sadly as she was going away, and when I wished her good by, held me in her arms, and, kissed me, without being able to speak a single word.”

Sophia, extremely affected by this account, scarcely had power to refrain from tears herself. The

character of Clarentine, "jealous in honour," and full of sensibility as it was, she knew too well, not to feel deeply for the distress of heart she must endure, when quitting the house under imputations so disgraceful, unsupported by the soothing expectation of ever being entirely absolved, and even uncertain whether her return to it would ever be permitted.

Yet, notwithstanding the conviction her note brought to the mind of Sophia, she ventured not to communicate it to her mother, since, to one who believed her guilty, it might appear too much to border upon a spirit of independence and pride, moderate as it was ; and since nothing, she was certain, but the extremest humility and deepest contrition could now gain her indulgence. For this reason, therefore, she carefully concealed its contents, and deferred answering it till evening, when being released by Harriet from her attendance upon her brother, she shut herself up in her own room, and wrote as follows :

MISS DELMINGTON.

" You judge rightly, dearest Clarentine, when you say, *my heart can never be against you !* What are *appearances*, compared to a life blameless as yours has been for 17 years ? Such a life ought alone to establish confidence, and preclude suspicion. As for me, you will I hope easily credit me, when I tell you, I believed you innocent from the moment I heard the charge brought against you ; and were the whole world to raise its voice in your accusation, till its authority was rendered unquestionable by *positive proof*, I never should put any faith in its report. Why should an unblemished reputation, a fair and spotless character be coveted, if, upon trial, neither will avail to shield us from injustice ? Those who have cheerfully practised all the duties of their station, who for years have possessed, and merited the approbation

and esteem of all who knew them, deserve not surely, that on the first equivocal action of their lives, *surprise* should be converted into *doubt*—and *doubt* into *determined condemnation*!

“ But let me not dwell longer upon this ungrateful subject. We understand each other too well for it to be necessary, *I* should lose time in telling you how little I suspect you ; or *you* should spend yours in useless vindication ; I ask for none—I require none : but I should be rejoiced above measure, were you to write to me such an account, plain, simple, and undisguised, of this strange business, as I could safely shew my mother. You know her, my Clarentine ; you know how open her liberal mind is to conviction ; how ready her generous heart is to forget and pardon. That she certainly is, at present, uncommonly incensed, I will not pretend to conceal from you. Had the circumstances of the case been even less suspicious than they were, the pains that *have* been, and hourly *are* taken, to prejudice her against you, could hardly have failed in their effect ; since, as you will believe, no malicious aggravations are spared, no unfavourable interpretations omitted, that can conduce towards effectually eradicating you from her heart. Yet fear not, my own Clarentine—that heart still whispers many kind things to her in your behalf ; and truth and innocence *must*, in the end, prevail !

“ You may wonder perhaps, and naturally, that for the detail I solicit, I apply not to Edgar himself. Blame him not however, too rashly ; nor, for one moment, believe so ill of him, as to imagine he would have neglected doing you all the justice, and making you all the reparation in his power, had he been in a situation to have undertaken the explanation I ask—Alas ! my dear Clarentine—I know not even if, from *him*, it can *ever* be obtained ! Judge of my mother’s—judge of our affliction ! By turns speechless or delirious, he now lies in a raging fever,

unconscious of our distress, and insensible of his own danger. The physician who visited him this morning, on hearing of the party he was engaged in yesterday, attributed his illness to what he termed, *an excess of conviviality*, and gave us to understand, it was chiefly owing to his having first heated his blood by drinking more than he was accustomed to, and then by hard riding. Perhaps these two causes might contribute, in some degree, to produce the effect we so much lament; but that they were the *sole* causes, it is impossible, knowing the extreme agitation he afterwards underwent, to believe. A moderate degree of attachment, a very cool head, and a more unfeeling heart would, I suspect, notwithstanding the *excesses* he is supposed to have run into, have better preserved him from the sufferings he now endures, than the temperance I every moment hear so warmly extolled; since its limits were so slightly infringed, that I, who saw and spoke to him, before I left the parlour, scarcely perceived that he was at all disordered.

“As for my mother, I am convinced that in her heart, *she* puts no more faith in this opinion than *I* do, though she endeavours, and finds a species of consolation in attempting it, to persuade us she does. I own myself it is much pleasanter to believe his illness arises from circumstances merely accidental, such as will give way to proper attendance, and medical skill, than to acknowledge its germ lies in his heart, and its cure in her power!

“Lady Julia means to write to you to-morrow; in your answer, my Clarentine, forbear, I beseech you, to give her the slightest hint concerning any thing that has passed. It is thought right here to keep her in profound ignorance upon the subject; our *Superieure* has so decreed it, and seems to think, if the projected alliance can be brought to bear, it is of very little consequence upon what terms—with

how much anguish to one party, or with what prospects to the other.—Very humane policy, it must be allowed !

“ We heard from my brother Frederick to-day. He is no longer in the same ship with Mr. Somerset, which he seems to lament extremely. They parted soon after Somerset was made post-captain, and Frederick, who is now stationed in the Mediterranean, knows not exactly where his friend has been ordered, but believes he is in the West Indies.

“ Adieu, dearest Clarentine. My heart is very sad, and my letter not very consolatory ; but in such a house, and under such impressions, it would be difficult to write with higher spirits.

“ A thousand loves to Madame d’Arzele, and compliments to the Chevalier. When does he return ? Send your answer by him, and beg he will seize the first opportunity of delivering it to me privately. After that I will let you know whether you may safely write to me in the usual way, by post.

“ Once more, my Clarentine, adieu. “ S. D.”

The three first days that succeeded the writing this letter, were marked by no material changes in Sir Edgar, and no circumstance of moment in the family. On the morning of the fourth, however, the Chevalier de Valcour, in his way from Sidmouth to Welwyn Park, stopped for a few minutes at Delmington, and found means, before he left the house, of delivering the following letter to Sophia.

MISS S. DELMINGTON.

Sidmouth, July 13.

“ The charge of secrecy with which you conclude your affectionate letter, my ever-kind Sophia, alarms me so much on your account, that I now answer it with the most fearful mistrust and apprehension.

You own it not ; yet, I can have no doubt you were prohibited from holding any correspondence with me.—Oh why, my dearest girl ! for one who is deemed undeserving such an indulgence, why incur such a risk ? Had not the apprehension of appearing to you ungrateful, or negligent, urged me, even in opposition to my own judgment, too strongly to be resisted, believe me, I never should have found courage, after such a caution, to have addressed you, by any conveyance whatever. Pray Heaven I may not be involving you in any portion of my disgrace, by venturing upon so hazardous an experiment ! It would quite break my heart, were that to be the case ! Write to me no more, therefore, I beseech you.—Tempt me not again to engage you in such danger ;—to have forborne answering so friendly a letter as your last would have been impossible ; and yet I tremble to think what you may suffer by doing it !

“ I see, my Sophia, notwithstanding the generous anxiety with which you endeavour to cheer me with better hopes, I see plainly, I am now become an utter exile from your house ! I have lost the only tie that could ever bind me to your mother’s heart, her good opinion ; and I fear, *irrecoverably* lost it ; at least, if I must depend for its restoration on my own justification ; since at such a moment as this, while your unhappy brother lies in the dreadful state you describe to me, no selfish considerations upon earth, no prospect of personal advantage, however great, could induce me to enter the lists as his accuser. Let my vindication, therefore, rest where it is, for the present ; and suffer me at least to delay entering upon the subject, till I hear better tidings of Sir Edgar, and can do it with less pain to his mother’s feelings. At this time there would be a hardened insensibility, a want of decency, in beginning such an explanation, I shudder but to think of ; nor could I do it, even to regain what I most prize in the world, Lady Del-

mington's esteem ! It would seem to me, almost like raking up the ashes of the dead. It would be unpardonable, it would be cruel !

“ Madame d'Arzele, whose tenderness and whose near affinity give her a sort of claim to the most unlimited confidence, has wrung from me, reluctant as I was to make such a disclosure, even to her, every circumstance of this heart breaking affair. She saw me depressed, and wretched, beyond all power of concealment ; and so deeply partook in, so soothingly compassionated my affliction, that I found a species of consolation in pouring out all my sorrows into her affectionate bosom. She has fortified and calmed me ; given me courage, I think, to bear with resignation whatever sentence is to be pronounced against me ; and taught me, I hope, with thankfulness for the past, to submit unrepiningly to the future.

“ I have thought much, as you will believe, of my own situation, and thought of it with the most serious anxiety. It would be madness, I fear, let my future defence have what effect it may, to expect that my residence in your family should, during the present state of affairs, be again allowed. My request therefore is, that whenever the decree of banishment, I look forward to with such dread, is pronounced, I may be permitted to go to Mr. Lenham's, whom I have every reason to hope will, at least for a time, admit me. If Lady Delmington, however, has other views for me, she may rest assured of my humblest concurrence : but it seems far more probable, she will rejoice, amidst so many other cares, to be exempted from any additional one, and that consequently, I may rely upon her giving a ready sanction to my petition.

“ This morning, I received a kind, but melancholy letter from Lady Julia. Whilst I perused it, how did I bless heaven that I had it still in my power to read the expressions of attachment and confidence

with which she honours me, with unblushing cheeks, and a consciousness of not having forfeited by ill conduct the friendship she has hitherto professed for me. To a guilty mind, every partial sentence that fell from her pen would have been a stab; to me, my dearest Sophia, they were as balm, my wounded spirit required; and the tears I shed over the whole letter, were literally tears of luxury and enjoyment.

"I am rejoiced to find you have heard from Frederick. At such a period as this, how welcome to his mother's heart must have been the tidings of his health and safety; mine bounded with pleasure, for her sake, at the news.

"Would to heaven, I too could hear from Mr. Somerset! Might he not have written to me, dear Sophia, before he embarked upon so distant an expedition? Will *he* also, do you think, cast me off—forget all his past regard, and concern himself about me no more? Alas! this is not the time he should have chosen for such a desertion! when every word of kindness is so precious, I can less bear than ever to lose the consolation his remembrance would have afforded me. Often, often have I thought of him, since I left your house. How are all his predictions verified. Oh! could he but know what an unerring prophet he has proved, with what regret, unless he has changed indeed, would he reflect upon the additional sorrow his neglect must occasion me!

"But my dearest Sophia, I ought to apologise for these irrational murmurs. Unhappiness, I believe, makes egotists of us all; and as the friend of the unhappy, you must learn to bear with their infirmities. I will give way to such gloomy reflections, however, no longer, but hasten to a less unpleasant subject.

"Our sweet little Eugenie begins already. I think, to find benefit from the change of air. She has bathed twice since our arrival, and bore it extremely well. Her dear mother views her improved looks, with a

degree of transport I can give you no idea of; and but for the dejection I involuntarily cast over it, ours would be the most cheerful little society in the world.

“The Chevalier has promised to give us frequent accounts of Sir Edgar. I implored he would, lest my anxiety respecting him, overpowering my own scruples, should induce me to write again to you for intelligence.

“I venture not, in the clandestine manner I now address you, to recommend myself to your honoured mother, nor even to include my good wishes to our sisters; my prayers are all I dare offer up, either for them, or for Sir Edgar; and that they may be accepted is the most fervent wish of my heart.

“And now, my best Sophia, farewell; probably, “a long farewell.” Love me; think of me sometimes, however distant; and be assured of the tenderest, and most grateful affection, of your own,

“CLARENTINE DELMINGTON.”

Deeply affected by the contents of a letter, in many places so generous, in all so simple and so touching, Sophia could not resist the strong impulse she felt, the first moment Sir Edgar’s amended state of health allowed her to enter upon the subject, to communicate it to her mother. She was persuaded that the passage in particular, which accounted for Clarentine’s silence with regard to her own vindication, could not fail making the most sensible impression upon such a mind as Lady Delmington’s; and might conduce more towards reinstating her in her heart, than the strongest asseverations, or even the dearest proofs of innocence, unseasonably brought forward.

In this opinion she found herself fully justified by the event. Lady Delmington, overcome by the delicacy, the gentleness of spirit that breathed throughout the whole letter, wept over it with mingled sen-

sations of tenderness and admiration ; and when she came to its conclusion, warmly exclaimed—

“ Amiable and excellent girl ! oh, where shall I find courage, after this, to go through the painful task I am enjoined, to announce to her the decision that has been past ? ”

“ What decision, dearest Madam ? ” fearfully enquired Sophia ; “ Is it possible, have you really consented ? ”

“ Ask me no questions, Sophia,” interrupted Lady Delmington, “ I cannot revoke the reluctant promises I have given, nor can I bear to dwell longer upon the subject. Leave me then for the present. I shall write to your poor friend this evening, and shew you my letter before it goes. Let *that* answer all your objections.”

Sophia retired with a heavy and foreboding heart ; and early the following morning was summoned to her mother’s dressing-room, to hear the dreaded sentence she had been taught to expect.

MISS DELMINGTON.

Delmington-House, July 6th.

“ The sight of my hand-writing will, I doubt not, equally astonish and alarm you : but divest yourself of all apprehensions, Clarentine ; it is as little my purpose to shock you by useless recriminations, as to mislead you by delusive promises ! I write with a determination of speaking openly and frankly to you ; and of putting an end at once to a state of uncertainty, I know so well how to pity.

“ Now, therefore, let me own, my still-dear Clarentine, that the unfortunate passion of my son, however the violence with which it at last burst forth may have distressed, has not, for one moment, surprised me. I have long entertained a vague suspicion of this nature, which being strengthened by the insinu-

ations of others, almost arose at one time to positive conviction. Then, you will say, would have been the proper season to have devised some effectual check to its further progress; true; but we are not always aware of the danger of procrastination, and your extreme youth at that period; the separation that shortly after took place between you and Edgar; other cares; and above all, the difficulty of finding a more eligible abode for you, diverted me from my design, and led me to silence, as groundless, every intrusive apprehension.

“Edgar’s conduct ever after, whether dictated by acquired caution, or resulting from natural reserve, was so astonishingly guarded; his behaviour to you betrayed so little of the *lover*, I may almost add, of the *friend*, that till this extraordinary discovery laid his heart open before us, I question if a single individual of my family, Mrs. Harrington and myself alone excepted, had ever conceived the slightest idea of his attachment.

“The case is now changed; and he who, when a mother’s watchful eye fearfully observed him, had sufficient command over his passions, to conceal and restrain them, in one unguarded moment, when all distrust was over, and all vigilance at an end, turned traitor to himself, and wantonly betrayed his *own*, and, ah Clarentine! I greatly fear, *your* secret also!

“But of this I have no right, no wish to be informed. As circumstances now stand, such a confession would only add to my concern for you, without enabling me to flatter you with the most distant hope. I might lament over you: but as I cannot serve you, leave me, at least, the consolation of a *doubt* upon this subject.

“Favoured, and beloved as you have ever been by Lady Julia Leyburne, I cannot suppose she wholly concealed from you the treaty that was in agitation between her father and myself. I may therefore venture to speak to you of it without disguise.

“Independent of the noble income Lady Julia will bring my son, an income which, considering the narrow limits of his own, and the large deductions from it that must be made in order to pay his sister’s fortunes, becomes almost indispensable to the ease and comfort of his remaining life. She is the woman whom, amidst thousands, I would have selected, as the one most likely to render him happy.

“Allowing for the natural timidity of her temper, the domestic education she has received, and the life of unvarying retirement she has led, I observe in her the seeds of every good quality that can be desired. The helpless indolence that formerly marked her disposition gives place to greater energy every day. She is sincere, generous, and benevolent; and by the placid meekness that characterises her, seems to me, of all others, the wife best suited to one, who already announces a temper so impetuous and ardent as Edgar.

“Thus far then, I am justified in wishing for this match. It ensures affluence and independence to himself; the certainty of being able to provide handsomely for his sisters; the prospect of becoming heir to Mrs. Harrington; and the fairest hopes, if reasoned gently into compliance, of his enjoying, ever after, a state of domestic peace and serenity.

“Now suffer me to reverse the picture: suffer me to trace a faint sketch of the evils that, in my opinion, would follow his union with you; nor imagine, dear Clarentine, that my purpose is to wound or insult you by the comparison. Far be such an intention from my heart. No, my love; to warn and caution you is all I have in view. My language would be the same to either of my own daughters in the same circumstances.

“To speak first, therefore, of the dissimilarity of your tempers; Edgar’s, irritable, though soon subdued; often captious, violent, and unreasonable,

would make the torment of your life ; since clear-sighted and penetrating as you are, his starts of irrational passion could never escape you, nor consequently, ever fail either grieving, or alarming you. Not so Lady Julia. Absent in conversation ; seldom animated enough to be sensible of what is passing around her, his causeless resentment, unless directed against herself, would scarcely awaken her attention, and never reach her heart. Injustice, she has not discrimination sufficient to distinguish, nor expostulation, courage enough to hazard ; by her, therefore, he would escape uncondemned ; and by him, she would live undisturbed. His kindness to herself would be all she would require ; and indifferent to his general conduct, nothing would wound, because nothing would strike her except his neglect.

“ Would this Clarentine—ask your own heart—would this be your case ? “ Tremblingly alive all o’er,” would not you feel as sensibly for others as for yourself ? could you, an unconcerned witness of this irascibility, endure to sit tamely by, without attempting, either by reason or supplication, to moderate and appease him ? No, you could not ; and what would be the consequence ? By seeking to restrain, you would inflame him ; and by uttering, or even *looking* disapprobation, however deserved, you would bring down upon your own head the wrath originally aimed at others. From an object passionately beloved, reproof, though only implied by a gesture, or a glance, is harder to be borne, and sinks deeper into the heart, than from any other quarter ; and Edgar naturally inclined to jealousy, anxious for your esteem, and but too ready to take alarm at the slightest appearance of its failure, would suffer himself, and impose upon you, every torment that apprehended indifference, or contempt, could inflict.

“ I have been thus explicit, my dearest girl, with regard to my doubts, concerning the probable event

•f a marriage which, to Edgar at least, now appears so desirable, in the hope of proving to you, that *all* my objections to it are not the result of ambitious and interested considerations. Heaven preserve me from ever wishing to aggrandise or enrich my family at the expense of his or your lasting misery! He shall be allowed time for mature deliberation, before I again urge, or even converse with him upon the subject; and the only thing I ask of him, or of you is, that from this time forward to the period of his coming of age, you will forbear holding any correspondence with, and avoid every opportunity of meeting each other. Meanwhile, as it would appear to me dishonourable in the extreme to deceive Lord Welwyn in an affair of so much consequence to himself, as well as his daughter, I purpose laying frankly before him the exact state of the case; leaving it to him to decide whether he chooses still to adhere to his engagement, and wait the moment of my son's final decision before he enters into any other, or whether he prefers, at once, breaking off the match.

“ My firm opinion is, that his partiality in Edgar's favour is so great, that nothing but absolute necessity will induce him to withdraw his word. I may be mistaken; yet, at all events, Clarentine, we must whilst this negotiation is depending—we must be separated. Lady Julia may never be my daughter: but still, alas! such is the rigorous duty my situation and my judgment enjoin me, that I dare not give an appearance of such encouragement to Edgar's love, as he might naturally imply from your being continued under the same roof with him, after his attachment to you has been made public.

“ My heart bleeds for you, my gentle Clarentine, whilst I compel myself to perform this unwelcome part. The day perhaps may come, however, when even *you* will acknowledge I have acted right; and when, having preserved Edgar from the commission

of an act of injustice towards his sisters, and you from consequent self-reproach, I may be thought to merit blessings, where now I seem only to deserve condemnation.

“ Your request of being allowed to repair to Mr. Lenham’s meets with my fullest approbation. Write to him, my love, to enquire whether he can admit you, and to settle with him the terms of your board; whatever those terms may be, I shall unhesitatingly comply with them, and beg you will transmit to me his answer the moment it arrives.

“ As I shall endeavour to the utmost of my power to conceal from my son the place of your future abode, you would essentially oblige me by deferring to communicate it to Lady Julia, till I can be assured he will make no attempt to follow you. By requesting her letters may be directed to you, under cover to any third person you may choose to appoint for that purpose, after you arrive in town, this may be easily effected, and may perhaps save me from much perplexity and distress. To Sophia, as I can so entirely depend upon her, you have my readiest consent to write as often as you wish, yet—oh! forgive these too necessary precautions—yet, even to her, lest accident should betray what I so anxiously desire to keep secret, I would recommend to you always to send your letters inclosed to Madame d’Arzele.

“ Is it time now, my dearest Clarentine, I should come to the conclusion of this long, and I fear you will think unfriendly explanation. I grieve to be obliged, for one instant, to give pain to your generous heart; nor can you feel deeper regret on receiving, than I do in announcing, this sentence of temporary banishment. Let one circumstance, however, be your consolation; I acquit you, as well from my knowledge of your past rectitude, as from the testimony of Edgar himself, and the sentiments contained in your letter to Sophia, of every species of blame,

and of every suspicion injurious to your character; and rejoice in being able to assure you, that you have not at this moment in the world a friend, who thinks more highly of your principles and worth, than your sincere and ever most truly affectionate,

“ H. DELMINGTON.”

CHAPTER VIII.

THE entire and unexpected acquittal that terminated Lady Delmington's letter, afflicting as was its general tenour, proved to Clarentine a source of alleviation the most cheering, and the most grateful. Her heart, lightened of the heavy weight that had oppressed and sunk it, whilst labouring beneath unmerited obloquy, now glowed with sensations of affection and delight; and assured that wherever she went, the esteem and good wishes of her friends would follow her, she summoned all her resolution to her aid, in order to accomplish the task assigned her, with cheerfulness and resignation.

Her letter to Mr. Lenham was natural and respectful. She began by apologising, after so many years absence, after so long and mutual a silence, for venturing to recal to his memory an object that must be so nearly obliterated from it; and then, as a still further excuse for the liberty she was taking, made use of the name of Mr. Somerset, and related in simple and plain terms the flattering encouragement he had given her to apply to Mr. Lenham for protection and countenance, should any unforeseen event ever lay her under the necessity of quitting Delmington House. Such an event, she added, *had* now occurred; and it was the wish of Lady Delmington herself, that she should hazard the application with which she was about to trouble him.

Proceeding after this to state the nature of that application more at large, she hinted next, as delicately as she could, the terms upon which, alone, Lady Delmington had emboldened her to make such a request; and concluded by intreating, that whenever he favoured her with an answer, he would be as clear and explicit upon that article as possible.

Having directed and sent off this letter, she would by the same post have written again to Sophia: but apprehensive that Lady Delmington might disapprove her taking too frequent advantage of the permission she had granted her to continue the correspondence, she compelled herself to remain silent till she heard from Mr. Lenham, anxious as she was to prove, how little reality there was, in the idea her Ladyship seemed to entertain, of her having conceived a stronger degree of affection for Sir Edgar, than she had hitherto avowed.

Nothing, in truth, could be more ill-grounded than this charge. That Clarentine loved him, in remembrance of the early friendship of their childhood, was fully sensible of the goodness of his heart, and did ample justice to his talents and his conversation, she wished not to disown: but that she now felt, or ever had experienced for him, that species of preference Lady Delmington, in one part of her letter, imputed to her, she found herself ready, in the face of heaven, to deny! Nor did she think there was any merit in having thus withstood him; since Edgar, warmly as he had lately shewn himself attached to her, had never before given her any reason to believe him so partial; but on the contrary, by his extreme versatility, and inexplicable inconsistencies, had often led her to suspect he was actually playing a part for his own private amusement, whenever he shewed himself more attentive to her than usual. Above all disguise herself, inexperienced; and diffident of her own powers of attraction, it had not once occurred to

her that it was possible any human being could endure a state of such perpetual anxiety, and undergo so long and irksome a restraint, merely from motives of concealed affection for her. As he had now, however, entered upon her justification, and made so honourable a report in her favour, she hoped, should the subject be again revived, he would likewise undeceive his family with regard to her knowledge of, or participation in his sentiments.

Whilst these reflections occupied her mind, as she sat near the window at which she had been writing, a scene caught her attention from the road, which effectually banished every remembrance of her own concerns, and left her only sensible to emotions of compassion and terror.

A lady and gentleman, driving past in a curricule, and followed by a servant and a child on horseback, had been stopped, at the moment of Clarentine's looking up, by the cries of their little companion, whose horse trotting unguardedly on, had stumbled within twenty yards of the farm house, and with some violence thrown her to the ground.

She was instantly raised, and carried to a bank by the side of the road, where the lady, who had already alighted, was supporting and soothing her, when Clarentine, breathless with eagerness, ran out to offer her services, and to intreat the little sufferer might be carried into the house, till it was known whether she had not received any injury that required immediate attention.

The lady, struck by her appearance, and the benevolent earnestness with which she spoke, looked up at her with extreme surprise, and after a moment's hesitation, thanked her for the offer, and rising with the child in her arms, prepared, as well as the gentleman who had driven her, to follow whither she chose to lead.

On their entrance into the house they were met

by Madame d'Arzele, who from her own window, which was just over that of Clarentine, having likewise beheld the whole transaction, was now on the point of rushing out with the same friendly intentions.

She hurried them all into the parlour; and then, sending for her maid, an experienced attendant upon children, recourse was had to the common application made use of upon such occasions; and in a short time the little girl, being but very slightly hurt, smiled upon her new friends with affectionate gladness, and with far more sensibility than could have been expected from her age, gratefully repeated to them the thanks and apologies the lady dictated to her.

As the two strangers both spoke French very fluently, and seemed particularly charmed, by the manners and conversation of Madame d'Arzele, to whom Clarentine willingly resigned the task of entertaining them, it was with evident reluctance they at length arose to depart. At the door, whither Clarentine attended them, they intreated permission to call again; and the lady informing her of her name and abode, added, that before she and her friend left Sidmouth, she should likewise hope for the honour of seeing them at her own lodging.

Clarentine curtseying in silence, took the direction that was offered her, and the next minute, the curri- cle being brought to the door, they lifted the interesting little girl into it, and placing themselves on each side her, drove her away.

"Eh bein," cried Madame d'Arzele, when Clarentine went back to her, "comment trouvezvous notre inconnue? Elle a un petit *minois de fantaisi* qui me plait beaucoup; et sa conversation, piquante et enjouée me paroît remplie d'esprit et d'agrément."*

Clarentine smiled, and answered, "If I honestly

"Well, what is your opinion of our pretty stranger? Her comic little countenance pleased me extremely, as well as the gaiety and spirit of her conversation."

confess, that I was more struck by the expression of sincerity and goodness that marked the countenance of the gentleman, than by the sparkling vivacity of his brilliant companion, what will you say to me?"

"That your taste is more solid than my own, and that in all probability you are perfectly right; but shew me their card."

Clarentine did so, and Madame d'Arzele read aloud the names of Admiral Compton, and Mrs. Henry Hertford.

"Admiral!" repeated she, "then perhaps, Clarentine, he knows your friend Captain Somerset!"

Clarentine shook her head with a look of incredulity, and the tears started into her eyes, which Madame d'Arzele observing, instantly changed the subject; and soon after they were called to dinner.

In the evening, Clarentine, who had not been out for some days, and was anxious, as much as possible, to dissipate her mind, and drive away the melancholy ideas that perpetually obtruded themselves, obtained Madame d'Arzele's permission to take Pauline with her, and set out on a walk towards the sea side.

Upon their arrival at the beach, not finding any company there, Clarentine seated herself upon the edge of a small boat, which had lately been drawn out of the water to undergo some repairs, and whilst her little friend was wandering about in search of shells and weeds, found a species of interest and amusement in attending to the occupation of a party of poor fishermen, who, immediately opposite to the station she had chosen, were busily employed in dragging up their nets; and whose distant voices, as they were occasionally raised or depressed, taught her how to judge of their success, or how to pity their disappointment.

Whilst engaged in this contemplation, time insensibly stole on, and the sun had already been set some minutes before Clarentine recollected the hour, or

thought of returning ; rising at length, however, and looking round for her young companion, what was her surprise to see her advancing with a gentleman who held her hand, and whom, as they drew nearer, she discovered to be Mr. Eltham.

Hastening forward the moment he caught her eye, and gaily addressing her—" Oh, that I were a poet," exclaimed he, " to celebrate, as it deserves, this romantic scene, and the lovely sea nymph that contributes so much to embellish it !"

Clarentine, to whom, since she was grown hopeless of ever revisiting Delmington herself, the sight of any one she had formerly known there afforded a sort of melancholy gratification, now beheld Mr. Eltham with more pleasure than she had ever before experienced, and smiling at the flightiness with which he began the conversation, rallied him upon his unfashionable gallantry, and expressed her wonder at seeing him thus unexpectedly at Sidmouth.

Delighted at a reception that partook so little of the frigid solemnity that had hitherto marked her conduct towards him, and construing this change into a favourable omen, Eltham, in high good humour, as they proceeded towards the farm-house, at which Clarentine resided, began an account of his journey, and of the motives that had prompted him to undertake it ; the principal one of which, he very seriously averred, was *ill-health*, and the great desire he had to try sea-bathing, and change of air !

Clarentine, half tempted to laugh at an assertion, his looks and whole appearance so directly contradicted, yet judging it best not to betray her incredulity, compelled herself to express some degree of concern upon the occasion ; and then, giving a different turn to the conversation, asked him how long it was since he had seen any of the family at Delmington.

" I was there yesterday," answered he, " and had

the pleasure of a short tête-a-tête with Mrs. Harrington, by whom I was received."

"Did you see no one else? neither Lady Julia, nor Sophia?" "Oh yes; they both came down before I went away. The latter had been sitting with her brother, who is now sufficiently recovered to bear reading aloud, and, I believe, begins to walk about his room. I was not admitted to him of course; but I hear he looks extremely ill, and is low-spirited to a degree that renders him absolutely nervous."

Clarentine sighed at this melancholy information, and for some minutes, there was a mutual and total silence. Eltham, at length, however, addressing her again, said—

"Have you formed any acquaintance, Miss Delmington, since you came here? Do you go out at all?"

"No, scarcely ever, unless it is to walk with the children."

"You know none of the people then in this neighbourhood?"

"Yes, one lady there is, whom accident introduced to us. Her name is Hertford; she is a married woman, and was accompanied by a gentleman, who being much older than herself, is probably either her uncle, or her father."

"And this gentleman," cried Eltham, with some earnestness, "what is *he* called?"

"Compton!" answered Clarentine.—"Admiral Compton."—"The very woman!" exclaimed Eltham, with a wicked, though half suppressed laugh. "Poor Harry Hertford's widow! And so, Miss Delmington," continued he, "you tell me this lady is at Sidmouth? Pray, how often have you seen her?"

"Only once," answered Clarentine. "But pray tell *me* likewise, what you know about her, and why you laughed, when I spoke of her?"

"Aye," cried he. "First, however, let me ask, did you like her?"

"That is nothing to the purpose," answered Clarentine; "if I say I did, it will probably prevent your giving me the account I solicit; and if I say I did *not*, it might lead you to be more severe than you would otherwise think right.—Excuse my speaking of her, therefore, at all."

"I do assure you," cried he, after a moment's reflection, resuming a graver look, "these scruples are very unnecessary. I know nothing of the lady that ought to be seriously construed to her disadvantage; and if you could tell me where she lodges, I would go and pay my respects to her and the Admiral to-morrow."

"I have no right then," cried Clarentine, "to enquire further, nor do I mean it. Only this, Mr. Eltham, let me say; if you believe or have any just reason to suspect Mrs. Hertford is not in every respect a proper acquaintance for Madame d'Arzele, you do very wrong to deny it; since, without any injury to the lady's reputation, you might put her on her guard against contracting an intimacy, which, at some future period, she may have reason to repent: as for *me*, I shall not long be in any danger of meeting her; nor, if I were, do I think the world would be so severe upon me, as upon a defenceless young foreigner in Madame d'Arzele's situation, destitute as she is of advocates, and utterly unknown as are her principles and character. Tell me therefore, honestly, Mr. Eltham, without entering into any detail, is Mrs. Hertford such a woman, as, had you a sister, you would introduce to that sister's acquaintance?"

Eltham paused a moment; looked irresolute, and embarrassed; but at length frankly answered—"She is *not*!"

"Enough," cried Clarentine gratefully, "you may rely upon my discretion, and rest assured that so far from seeking to know more, I will never mention her name to you again."

"You will oblige me," returned Eltham; "now therefore let us drop the subject."

Then adverting to what she had said concerning her speedy removal from Sidmouth, he enquired how soon she purposed going?

"I wait," answered Clarentine, "for letters from town, without which I can decide nothing?"

"Do you think then of fixing in London?"

"I will be plain with you, Mr. Eltham," replied Clarentine, with a good-humoured smile; "there is one subject upon which I have promised not to question *you*, and it would oblige me particularly, were you, upon this, not to question *me*."

"I am silenced!" cried Eltham—"Pardon a curiosity so unlicensed, and assure yourself, I will suffer it to distress you no more."

"Then all is well," said Clarentine, "and as we are bound to mutual forbearance upon these two articles, let us endeavour to outvie each other in the strictness with which we perform our engagements."

"Remember, however," cried Eltham laughing, "that fair as this compact seems, mine is, by much the hardest part; since you cannot possibly be so much interested upon the subject of Mrs. Hertford, as every man must be upon that of Miss Delmington."

"If this were indeed the case," returned Clarentine, "still, I can see nothing in it, that would not be perfectly just. Upon every occasion the most difficult task has always been assigned to the man; and were you now to be exempted from this general rule, where would be the merit of adhering to your agreement?"

They had by this time reached the house, and Madame d'Arzele coming out to meet them, Eltham was prevented from making any reply.

That lady, though surprised as much as Clarentine had been by his unexpected appearance, received him with great politeness, and looked, as she really felt,

extremely glad to see him. The animation, and originality of his character, had rendered him, even upon so short an acquaintance, a considerable favourite with her; and the extraordinary good breeding with which he conducted himself towards her, joined to a very fascinating and elegant address, all conspired to make her more partial to him, than to any of the other men she had seen, since her residence in England. It is true, she had admired the distinguished deportment of Sir Edgar, and been struck by the intelligence and expression that characterised his countenance: but ignorant as she was of its cause, the reserve which frequently cast a gloom over his features, and the cold gravity, that whilst it seemed intended to repress cheerfulness in others, appeared likewise to denote an unsocial and contemptuous disposition in himself, had often displeased her extremely, and led her very naturally, to suspect him of a degree of arrogance and pride, which at every period of life would have been offensive, but in so young a man, was peculiarly disgusting. She was not aware, that what she mistook for superciliousness, was merely the effect of inquietude; and that, had his heart been at ease, and all his painful distrusts at an end, the native sweetness of his temper would have shone forth with lustre, and converted into unqualified admirers, the very persons who now shrunk at his approach, and dreaded the apprehended severity of his criticism and his observation.

It being almost dark when Clarentine and Eltham entered, Madame d'Arzele immediately called for candles; and then, having obtained his promise to spend the remainder of the evening with them, apologised for leaving the room, and went up, as it was her constant practice, to see her children put to bed.

Clarentine, as soon as she was gone, placed herself at the table, and began working; whilst Eltham, conversing upon indifferent subjects, walked up and

down the room, occasionally stopping to look at the books that lay scattered in different parts of it, and then again proceeding forward. After some time, however, Clarentine finding that his perambulation had ceased, and that he stood quite still near the chimney, raised her eyes, and saw him with the most arch and expressive smile, holding Mrs. Hertford's card in his hand, and attentively examining it. This over, without being conscious he had excited observation, he carelessly replaced it, and resumed his walk, still wearing the same look of malicious significance.

For the contempt thus plainly manifested, and the singularity of Eltham's whole behaviour with regard to this lady, it is now time to account.

The last year of his being at Westminster school, having contracted a particular intimacy with one of the scholars named Godfrey, a ward of Admiral Compton's, he used frequently with this young man to be invited to that gentleman's house, and there to spend several days successively. Previous to his becoming acquainted with the family, Charles Godfrey, his friend, who was two or three years older than himself, had conceived a violent passion for the Admiral's niece, Miss Compton, who, at that time, was about twenty, and who had long clandestinely encouraged his love, and most anxiously sought to heighten and increase it. On the first introduction, however, of young Eltham, whether captivated by the superior elegance of his person, or the still greater superiority of his fortune, is unknown; but certain it is, she instantly changed her plan, levelled all her powers of attraction against him, and by the flattering attention she paid him and the condescending sweetness of her manners, very soon succeeded in making him the secret rival of poor Godfrey.

Thus far, powerfully assisted by her own beauty, and yet more, by the vanity and inexperience of her deluded lover, she found it no very difficult task to

persuade him to an elopement, and accordingly, one fine moon-light night,

“ When the sweet winds did gently kiss the trees,

“ And they did make no noise,”

taking advantage of the absence of her uncle, whom she was afraid to trust prematurely, but whose pardon she had no doubt of obtaining on her return, they sat off together for Scotland, and travelled some miles with uninterrupted speed and facility !

Half way on their journey, however, unhappily for this enterprising lady, Eltham's good genius, in the person of one of his trustees, pursued, and overtook them ; in consequence of which, Miss Compton and her maid were sent back to town in the same chaise that had conveyed them from it, and the despairing Mr. Eltham, with his providential deliverer, took the direct road to Oxford, where he was immediately entered, and left under the care of a very rigid tutor.

During the two first years that he spent at the university, he heard very little, either of Miss Compton, or her uncle. Charles Godfrey, he learnt, was gone abroad, after every art had been unsuccessfully tried by his *quondam* mistress, in order to regain her empire over him, and to extenuate her own conduct. Since then, she had failed in several other attempts to ensure new conquests ; and last of all he was told, she had retired with a distant relation to a small house, belonging to the Admiral, near Portsmouth.

Here she became acquainted with Mr. Hertford, the elder brother of a young Lieutenant in the navy, whom he had left Oxford to pay a visit to, whilst he lay at Spithead. Eltham, who was in the same college, knew him well : but little suspecting what would be the event of his journey, and unwilling to expose either Miss Compton, or himself, he had never mentioned her to him, and saw him no more till he was actually married !

Admiral Compton, indulgent as his niece had supposed him, and deficient as he had certainly been in early attention to her conduct, was not only extremely incensed against her, on account of her elopement with Eltham, but also, upon occasion of her marriage with Mr. Hertford. This young man, who was not yet of age, he knew to be the eldest son of a large family, which had been left at his father's death nearly unprovided for, and extremely dependent upon his future kindness. His estate was small, though report had, to his cost, probably made it much greater; and when it came into his possession, the unbounded extravagance of his wife, joined to his own indolence of disposition, completed his ruin at the end of two years.

They were now obliged to seek a refuge abroad, till their affairs could, in some measure, be arranged. The place they fixed upon for their residence was Switzerland; and here, in his twenty-third year, Mr. Hertford died. Eltham, who was then on his travels, happening to be at Lausanne when his friend was taken ill, went to see him; and after he was no more, though he did not continue visiting his widow, assisted her in a pecuniary way to a large amount, and then cancelling the bonds she had given him, and enclosing them to her with a very polite note, he pursued his journey into Italy.

Eight months now elapsed, during which he heard nothing more of her. At the end of that time, being one night at a ball given by the English ambassador at Naples, he unexpectedly saw her again accompanied by a lady who proved to be the same person she had spent so many months with, previous to her marriage.

Less apprehensive of his own credulity, however specious might be her artifices, and therefore less inclined to avoid her, than whilst he suspected she retained any power over his heart, he boldly stepped

up to her, the moment she had taken a seat, and concluding from her appearance in so gay a scene, it would be superfluous to address her in the language of condolment, or solemnity, he began with great gallantry, by reproaching her for suffering one hour to elapse after her arrival at Naples, without sending to inform him where he might have the honour of waiting upon her ; and then enquiring what stay she purposed making, without waiting for an answer, he protested in the same breath, he had never seen her look so handsome in her life, and should be utterly inconsolable unless she stood up and danced with him immediately.

Such a *debut*, so easy, so familiar, and unceremonious, Mrs. Hertford found extremely disconcerting. Hitherto, accustomed only to view Eltham in the light of an ardent and submissive lover, or of a generous and respectful friend, (such as he had shewn himself upon the death of her husband,) she was totally unprepared for so sudden a change, and completely at a loss how to treat him. Concluding, however, the wisest policy would be to adopt his own deportment and manners, and changing as he changed, to accommodate herself to the humour of the moment, her countenance brightened in an instant, and smiling upon him with the most fascinating sweetness, on his urging her again to stand up, she gave him her hand, and readily consented to follow him.

Mrs. Hertford, employing with wonderful ingenuity every art she was mistress of in order to please, animate, and entertain her too-presuming partner, succeeded, once again, before the evening was over, in completely turning his head ; he forgot the unfavourable opinion he had lately harboured of her—forgot every impropriety of her past conduct, and sensible only to her allurements, her beauty, the sallies of her wit, and the vivacity of her conversation, he

went home fully persuaded he had cruelly injured her, and more passionately in love than ever.

Early the following morning, he repaired to her house ; she refused seeing him till evening ; but to soften this severity, sent Mrs. Castleton, the lady who lived with her, down to him, to say, that nothing but indisposition, the consequence of her last night's fatigue, should have prevented her admitting him the moment his name was announced.

Thus irritating his impatience to see her, by delay ; and at the same time alarming him, by a false report of her illness, Eltham took his leave, determined, when the evening came, to give up every other engagement, and dedicate it wholly to her.

Accordingly, at the appointed hour, he again presented himself at her door, and with more parade and ceremony than his impetuosity led him to approve, was conducted through a long suite of apartments on the ground floor, into a very elegant saloon, where surrounded by a numerous circle, chiefly composed of gentlemen, he found Mrs. Hertford, conversing indiscriminately, with equal ease and gaiety, with every individual of her little court, and fixing as irresistably the attention, as she commanded the homage, of the whole room.

At once confounded and amazed at the sight of so brilliant an assembly, after the pathetic description he had heard in the morning of her languor and indisposition, Eltham, with some indignation, stopped irresolute at the entrance of the room, debating within himself whether he should proceed or not.

Whilst thus undetermined, however, a nod of salutation from Mrs. Hertford, accompanied by a most gracious smile, and a motion of the hand that invited him to approach, put an immediate end to his deliberations, and induced him hastily to advance.

As there happened at that moment to be a vacant seat next her, he took possession of it, and as soon as

the first compliments were over, instead of joining in the general conversation, employed himself very deliberately in surveying the different figures that composed the motley group around him, endeavouring by their exterior appearance to form some judgment of their characters and dispositions.

This review, during a short time, afforded him much amusement: but not having any one near him to whom he could communicate his remarks, and finding though there was much to ridicule, there was but little to interest, he soon grew weary of the cynical part he had chosen, and was turning to begin some trifling conversation with Mrs. Castleton, whilst her friend was talking to a lady near her, when the door unexpectedly opened with great precipitation, and the servant announcing a new visitor, whose name however Eltham could not distinctly hear, a young man of a very elegant deportment, made his appearance, and hastening up to Mrs. Hertford, paid his respects to her, with infinite good-breeding, and then, still addressing her in Italian, which seemed to be his native language, apologised for not having obeyed her summons in the morning.

"I was unavoidably detained," continued he, "by a person who came to me upon business, and whom I found it impossible to dismiss, till after the hour you had done me the honour to appoint. To-morrow, however," added he, "I hope to be at your orders the whole day."

This speech, though it was uttered in a low voice, and evidently designed for the ears of Mrs. Hertford only, Eltham, as he sat next her, lost not one word of.

Resentment and mortification at first kept him motionless and silent; but recollecting the various instances he had already known of the habitual duplicity of her character, the temporary illusion he had indulged vanished in a moment, and she appeared to him, once more, such as she really was; an unfeeling

ing and seductive coquette, made up of insincerity and deceit—aiming continually at universal admiration and conquest; and as unworthy of exciting, as she was incapable of experiencing, a serious or lasting attachment.

These reflections, which darted across his mind with the rapidity of lightning, left him not an instant in doubt, concerning the resolution he should take. Without seeking any explanation—without making the slightest apology—or betraying the least emotion, he rose up with an air of perfect indifference, and wishing Mrs. Hertford good evening, made a general bow to the rest of the party, and walked calmly out of the room; firmly determined never to trust himself within her doors again, nor ever, but as a casual and common acquaintance, to address her hereafter, should chance again throw him in her way.

His residence at Naples, after this useful little lesson, was too short to allow him an opportunity of breaking the wise resolution he had formed. He saw Mrs. Hertford no more: but enquiring among his friends, heard with a mixture of concern and indignation, that the present object of her attention, the young man he had seen at her house, was already engaged to another lady, a very amiable and lovely woman, whom, since his acquaintance with Mrs. Hertford, he had neglected in the cruellest manner, and it was generally believed, would end by deserting entirely.

The event, however, did not justify this prediction. From what cause her plan failed, Eltham never learnt, but that it proved wholly unsuccessful, and that she had left the place, was the first intelligence he received after he quitted Naples.

Since that period, till his arrival at Sidmouth, he had not even heard her name mentioned, and had almost forgotten her existence; the moment, however, that Clarentine recalled her to his memory, and con-

vinced him beyond a possibility of doubt, that she was actually a resident in the vicinity, a species of curiosity took possession of his mind, which he could neither account for, nor suppress; and which led him immediately to embrace the resolution of seeking her out, and renewing an acquaintance that had been so long interrupted. Yet, though determined upon this plan for himself, the natural sense of propriety, which, notwithstanding all his flightiness, still remained unextinguished at the bottom of his heart, pointed out to him strongly the necessity of preserving the young and inexperienced Clarentine from forming a connexion which might hereafter prove so extremely prejudicial to her. It is true, Mrs. Hertford was still visited, and still received by many estimable people; her character had never been publicly attacked, and her situation in the world was such as to place her in the best society: but by those who knew her real history—who might have heard of her conduct towards Charles Godfrey—her subsequent elopement—her many fruitless attempts to ensure an advantageous establishment—her dissipation and extravagance after she married; and finally, the total ruin to which she reduced her husband, by persons well acquainted with all these transactions,—what might not be the conclusion drawn, from seeing a young woman come forward, on her first setting out in life, under such auspices? Eltham, who really admired and respected Clarentine more than any one he knew; who adored the ingenuous simplicity of her manners, and the angelic purity of her mind; Eltham shuddered at the bare idea of her being exposed to the illiberal sarcasms of a censorious and misjudging world, which, guided in its decision by partial appearances, without investigation and without humanity, would in all probability, include her in every reflection thrown out against Mrs. Hertford, and ascribe to her, irreproachable as she was, the same levity of character,

which with so much more justice might be attributed to that lady.

Uninfluenced, therefore, by any ungenerous or vindictive motives, but solely instigated by an honourable desire of being useful to an interesting and now almost unprotected young female, Eltham acted the part that has already been decribed and gave the timely caution Clarentine so gratefully received.

CHAPTER IX.

IT was late in the evening before Eltham thought of taking leave, or knew how to tear himself from society which he found every moment more and more captivating. In Clarentine, particularly, since the reserve and distance that had formerly repulsed him had given way to greater ease and complacency, he discovered so many attaching qualities, such a noble frankness of disposition, softened by a delicacy so considerate, and a sweetness of temper so truly fascinating, that, although she was at times heavily depressed, and incapable of joining in the conversation, she made a deeper impression upon him, and rendered him a more sincere convert to her merit, than he had ever been before. At his request, on seeing a harp standing in a distant part of the room, she sung and played to him several of the most beautiful little airs she could select, and did it all with an unaffected diffidence, and unpretending modesty, that gave additional charms to the touching softness of her voice and expression.

“Upon my honour,” exclaimed he, at length, after she had ceased playing, and once more had quietly resumed her work, “you are the most extraordinary creature I ever met with! Brought up in such profound retirement; living in a place from whence all

professional excellence was so far removed, and where, consequently, you had as few means of improvement, as incitements to emulation—how, I beseech you—how did you acquire talents so bewitching, and manners so irresistible? Am I, at last, to believe in all I have heard reported, of innate and intuitive endowments? Am I to suppose you were *born* with all these advantages?”

“You cannot expect a serious answer, Mr. Eltham,” replied Clarentine, laughing, “to a question so extravagant, and therefore, if you please, we will talk of something rather more rational.”

She then turned the conversation upon the subject of her friend Sophia, and after warmly praising the goodness of her heart, and the sportive gaiety of her disposition, asked Eltham what he thought of her?

“Such an enquiry,” replied he, “coming from a person who is avowedly so partial to her, is hardly fair; however, I will answer you with sincerity and truth; and this I can the more readily do, as my opinion exactly coincides with your own. From the little I saw of her, she appeared to me a very lively, animated, and pleasing girl—totally devoid of either guile, or affectation. Her beauty,” continued he, “is not conspicuous enough to render her, upon a short acquaintance, an object of great attraction; but, I should suppose, she is one of those, who gaining upon the heart by imperceptible gradations, from having *begun* by *entertaining*, would very probably *end* by seriously *attaching*.”

Clarentine, much pleased with this answer, repeated its substance in French to Madame d’Arzele, who, whilst he was speaking, had been finishing a letter at another table.

“Ah, vous avez bien raison,” cried she, addressing Eltham, “Sophie, avec montre tant de

“Assez d’esprit pour savoir être aimable,

“Et pas assez pour être insupportable.*

* Florian.

zele quand il s'agit de servir ses amis, a un naturel si heureux, tant de franchise, et de droiture, qu'il est impossible de ne pas l'aimer, du moment qu'elle se fait connoître."*

"I fancy, my dear Madam," said Eltham archly, "Monsieur le Chevalier was very much of the same way of thinking. Mademoiselle Sophie appeared to be a great favourite of his."

"And consequently," returned Madame d'Arzele reproachfully, "you suspect him of being in love with her? Have a little more candour, however, Mr. Eltham; and be assured, it is very possible for a man of honour to find great charms in the society and conversation of an agreeable young woman, without having formed any plan in order to ingratiate himself in her favour; or, (under circumstances so disadvantageous as the Chevalier's) without being in the least influenced by an undue spirit of gallantry."

Eltham, extremely ashamed of having given cause for such a reproof, received it, however, with great humility, and earnestly apologised for the freedom and impertinence that had called it forth. The subject was then dropped, and a different conversation started.

When he, at length, had departed, and the two friends were left together, Clarentine related to Madame d'Arzele all that had passed upon the subject of Mrs. Hertford, and ended by intreating her to take the most effectual means, in order to prevent her ever being admitted again.

"Whatever appearance," continued she, "such a denial may have, it is sufficient that we know her to be a woman of an equivocal character, to render it absolutely necessary we should avoid all farther intercourse with her. I am no *prude*," added she smi-

* "Ah, you are very right. Sophia is so zealous in the service of her friends, has so happy a disposition, and so upright and generous a heart, that it is impossible not to love her, from the moment she makes herself known."

ling, "nor in the least apprehensive of being hurt myself by the society of such a person : but I begin already to be afraid of the world, to think of its uncharitable censures with terror, and to dread nothing so much as the danger of falling under its lash. Besides, what opinion could Mr. Eltham himself have of us, if, after the half-extorted caution I obtained from him, we were still—"

"My dearest Clarentine," interrupted Madame d'Arzele, "can you imagine any additional arguments are necessary to convince me of the propriety of all you have said? Be assured, I have not the smallest desire ever to see Mrs. Hertford more ; and shall give the strictest charge to my own woman, as well as to the people of the house, positively to deny us both, should curiosity or idleness bring her to this place again."

Clarentine was perfectly satisfied by such an assurance ; and soon after they retired for the night.

Three days now passed, during which they were totally unmolested by their apprehended visitor ; Eltham was, however, in that interval, almost a constant guest ; seldom quitting them, except at the hour of their meals, or for a short time in an evening, whilst Madame d'Arzele was up stairs with her children, and Clarentine taking her usual walk in the orchard at the back of the house.

Towards the close of the fourth day, whilst thus pursuing her solitary ramble, and perplexing herself with fruitless conjectures relative to the distressing silence observed by Mr. Lenham, Eltham unexpectedly joined her, and putting into her hand a packet of letters—"I am just returned," cried he, "from the post-house, where, after receiving my own despatches, I enquired whether there were any for you, and was entrusted with these. At first," continued he, "I felt half tempted not to deliver them till just at the moment of taking leave, lest the business of

reading them should employ so much of your time that I might be deprived of the indulgence you have hitherto granted me, and get no music to-night ; but, upon second thoughts, I persuaded myself you would have more conscience than to reward me so ill for my civility."

"Certainly," replied Clarentine, smiling, "let me, till now, have required what pressing I would, upon such an occasion as this, at least, I am bound to sing at the first word."

So saying, she hastened towards the house, and on entering the parlour, putting a book into Eltham's hand, proceeded impatiently to the examination of her several letters.

The first she opened was one from Mr. Lenham, written in terms so friendly and benevolent, that it brought tears into her eyes. He began by informing her, that having lost his wife some months previous to the receipt of her letter, he had lately prevailed upon a female relation of his, and her daughter, to fix their residence with him, and to undertake the entire superintendence of his family. These ladies, he added, though they had not the honour of being acquainted with Miss Delmington, would neglect no means in their power, he was persuaded, to render her abode beneath his roof as comfortable as possible ; and he therefore, flattered himself, the knowledge of their being his inmates would neither make any alteration in her plan, nor be the occasion of her deferring a journey he looked forward to with so much pleasure.

In compliance with her injunctions, he next, though with evident reluctance, spoke of the conditions upon which she had so positively declared her resolution of *alone* becoming his boarder, and fixing them at the most moderate rate, concluded by expressing his earnest wishes for her safe and speedy arrival.

"All then is now settled !" thought Clarentine, with a sigh ; "my departure is inevitable, and every

thing concurs to hasten and facilitate it ! Ah, would I could think of it with the same indifference that those will who first—”

She stopped, and checking the too ready murmurs that were unconsciously escaping her, turned to the yet unopened letters that lay upon the table, and taking them up, sought by their perusal to divert the painful ideas that had involuntarily obtruded themselves.

Meanwhile Eltham, who had for some time thrown aside his book, and placed immediately opposite to her, sat with his eyes intently rivetted upon her face, unsuspectingly observing her as she read, suddenly beheld every muscle in her countenance relax, and the tears stealing slowly down her cheeks, fall in large drops upon the paper that she held.

Inexpressibly affected by such a sight, yet, respecting too much the silent sorrow it betrayed, to disturb her, at that moment, with untimely questions, he waited anxiously till she had ceased reading, before he ventured to approach or interrogate her.

Softened by the compassionate gentleness of his looks and voice, unused to disguise, and open-hearted as a child, Clarentine, without allowing herself time for reflection, pointed to the letter she had just thrown down, and mournfully answered—

“ Ah ! were you to read that, Mr. Eltham, you would no longer wonder at my emotion. It comes from Sir Edgar Delmington, and though calculated upon the whole to give me the highest pleasure, yet in many places it is such as almost to break my heart.”

Thunderstruck by this speech, and far better qualified to comprehend its full meaning than Clarentine was aware, or indeed, had she *been* aware, she was at that instant sufficiently collected to guard against, Eltham changed colour, and losing all command over himself, indignantly exclaimed—

“ And is it possible then, Miss Delmington, that

the whining complaints, or the insolent reproaches of a man who has acted by you such a part, can have any effect upon a mind like yours ! Good God ! Why read his contemptible letters ? Why honour them with so much notice ?”

He was proceeding—when struck by the inconceivable amazement he saw depicted in Clarentine’s countenance, his own assumed a calmer expression, and with more composure he added—

“ But I beg your pardon—I ought not to declare my sentiments so freely, and scarcely know how to excuse the liberty I have taken.”

“ *Excuse it !*” repeated Clarentine, recovering by degrees from the extreme astonishment she had been thrown into—“ That I believe would *indeed* be difficult ! But at least to *account* for it, Mr. Eltham—explain your meaning—and tell me, I beseech you, how Sir Edgar Delmington can have given rise to this excess of enmity—of injustice !”

“ I see,” replied Eltham, proudly, “ I see plainly, that prejudiced as you are, Miss Delmington, all I can say, (and I acknowledge I have nothing *new* to tell you—nothing which your own integrity would not have taught you to condemn, but for the fatal partiality which has misguided you) will be of no further avail than to heighten your resentment against *me*, without lessening your good opinion of *him*. I have gone too far, however, to recede ; and therefore, as briefly as I can, I will now give you the *explanation* you demand.”

Clarentine, every instant more and more surprised, yet summoned sufficient courage to listen to him with composure, and he thus began—

“ Amongst all the various faults that may justly be ascribed to me, that of mean curiosity has never been of the number. You will consequently, Miss Delmington, readily believe me, I hope, when I positively assure you the information by which I was

enabled to judge of Sir Edgar's character and conduct was not of my own seeking. He is certainly no favourite of mine, but I knew he was destined to receive the hand of Lady Julia, and neither suspected, nor wished to know more. The day that preceded my arrival at Sidmouth, however, calling, as I had the honour to acquaint you, at Delmington House, I was introduced into a parlour where alone, and apparently in no very placid disposition of mind, I found Mrs. Harrington. Extremely at a loss how to keep up, or even *begin* any conversation, and hoping every instant to be relieved by the entrance of some other member of the family, I wandered about the room, anxiously seeking, either in the prospect, the furniture, or the drawings that hung round it, fresh subjects for remark, and new objects to discourse upon. At length my attention was caught by a very beautiful little sketch, representing a group of children at play. I took it down to examine it more nearly, praised it extremely, and asked Mrs. Harrington by whom it had been designed? This was a sufficient signal for her to begin! She told me, with much acrimony, it was by you; and then, with a virulence that defeated its own purpose, began so furious, and to me incomprehensible, a declamation against you, that I listened to her with equal wonder and disgust! To be brief—she concluded this malignant and indecent harangue, by a minute account of every circumstance attending your late nocturnal interview with Sir Edgar; and summed up the whole, as she grew cooler by reflection, with an earnest request to me never to make known what I had taken so little pains to learn."

Horror-struck by this cruel, and almost incredible proof of Mrs. Harrington's implacability, Clarentine was some time before she could command her indignation sufficiently to be able to speak with any degree

of calmness. At length, however, starting as if from a fearful dream—

“And what purpose, good Heaven!” exclaimed she, “could the relation of such a tale answer? Why publish it at all? and especially, why publish it to you?”

“Certainly,” replied Eltham, drily, “not to gratify *my* feelings; and still less, to heighten my opinion of her *own* principles! The chief object she proposed to herself was the indulgence of that determined and inexplicable hatred she seems to have conceived against you—a hatred, which not even the danger she incurred of ruining her favourite scheme, (by making me the confidant of secrets, which, if repeated to Lord Welwyn, might have induced him, at once to withdraw his word,) could prevent her giving utterance to. But enough of this intemperate fury—my design was not so much to speak of her, as to exculpate myself from the charge of *injustice* towards Sir Edgar, and to——”

“Oh, say no more,” interrupted Clarentine, impatiently, “say no more, Mr. Eltham, I beseech you! After the account that has been given you, I wonder not at any opinion you may have imbibed, either of Sir Edgar, or of me. Spare yourself therefore, the needless trouble of adding another syllable in your own justification—and satisfied with the bitter mortification you have made me undergo, have sufficient mercy, at least, not to prolong a conversation so insupportably humiliating!”

Eltham, extremely hurt by this speech, and yet more by the indignant severity with which it was uttered, now with great earnestness exclaimed—

“You wrong me cruelly, Miss Delmington! you wilfully and utterly misrepresent all I have said! Can you indeed believe, that if the rancorous accusations alleged against you by my officious informant had appeared to me either credible or just, I should

have been so wholly lost to sense and feeling, as to have deliberately selected *you* as the properest person to listen to their repetition?"

"Such a supposition," replied Clarentine, "may have been erroneous, but allowing it was so—allowing, in reality, you had no design to shock and afflict me—still, let me ask, why did you enter into a detail, which at least, you must be sensible, was so unnecessary and so improper?"

"Unnecessary!" repeated Eltham.—"What! when acquainted with every particular of Sir Edgar's unmanly conduct—when so fully convinced of his worthlessness and perfidy—and when witnessing the ill-deserved sorrow that his letter cost you—was I then to be silent? could I then suppress the indignation I felt awakened against him? You cannot yourself imagine it was possible! Disdain and contempt might, indeed, have kept me for ever silent, could I have been persuaded you regarded him with all the indifference he merits: but when I found his artifices had so well succeeded; when in addition to the unpardonable insult he has offered the unsuspecting Julia, I discovered also that he undermined *your* peace, won *your* heart, and made himself such an interest there, as neither the conviction of his duplicity, nor the disgrace he has brought upon you, can counteract; I forgot the rigid caution I had sworn to observe; and, at the hazard of incurring your everlasting displeasure, gave way to the almost irresistible impulse that urged me to lay before you my sentiments and opinion: that *either* will be of any avail, I have not, as I said before, the presumption to imagine: but remember, Miss Delmington, that if even among unthinking young men of his own age, whose moral principles, like my own, are far from being at all times strictly consonant to propriety, his late conduct appears so dishonourable, among the grave and more reflecting part of mankind it will seem too despic-

ble to leave you any excuse for still harbouring an attachment so every way unworthy of you !”

“ And what ground have you to believe Sir,” said Clarentine, quite sickened at the strange infatuation which led every body to conclude her heart was so deeply engaged, “ that the attachment you impute to me really exists ? You have hitherto heard but *one* side of the question ; be pleased now, to read Sir Edgar’s own letter, and then judge whether its contents are such as would be addressed to a very partial or a very tender mistress.”

Eltham, surprised beyond all measure at this unexpected trust, scarcely knew whether to accept it or not ; observing, however, that Clarentine was serious in her proposal, he at length, though not without some confusion, took the letter from her, and read as follows :

TO MISS DELMINGTON.

Delmington-House, July —.

“ Once more then, my beloved, my much injured Clarentine ! once more I am permitted to address you ! Saved—almost miraculously saved from the jaws of death, by what act more pleasing to Heaven can I testify my gratitude for this unhopèd for preservation, than by humbling myself before *her* whom I have so cruelly wronged, and by seeking to obtain forgiveness from a being so upright, and so pure !

“ Start not then, my gentle friend, at sight of this, I fear, unwelcome hand ; think not again that I will shock you by professions I know you hold in such abhorrence ! Alas ! though my heart is unchanged, my reason now tells me I have forfeited, and must renounce for ever, all right henceforward to renew them ! I have exposed you, if not to ruin, at least to banishment and indignity ; the part I have performed, artificial as it was—contrary to my own sense of right, my own principles and judgment—that dis-

sembling and disgraceful part, bringing with it its own punishment, has involved me in a depth of misery, of self-reproach, from which no time, perhaps, will ever rescue me ! Oh, Clarentine, condemn me as you will—think of me with what severity you may ; but, at least, when anger gives place to milder sentiments, when your first resentment is appeased, pity and compassionate me !—*You*, I hope, may yet be happy ; for you are tortured by no internal condemnation ; you are exempted from all regret, and have neither shame nor love to contend with. Ah ! may you never experience such love as mine has been—and may shame, as now, be for ever a stranger to your blameless and ingenuous mind.

“But why, inflexible, and indignant as you, no doubt, still remain—why do I thus wander from the original purpose of this letter, and trespass so long upon your patience ? Am I *now* writing to the partial friend of my childhood—the indulgent companion of my earliest years ? Am I *now* at liberty, as in happier times, to pour forth every secret of my heart—to expect you will participate in my feelings—share in, or soften my afflictions ? No ; I am addressing an inexorable judge, one whose last words still vibrate in my ears ; who bade me *renounce and forget her* ; who cruelly and sternly told me, that, “were I openly privileged to offer her my hand ; were all other obstacles to our union removed, her *own* repugnance to it could NEVER be surmounted !”

“Oh, Clarentine ! Sweet partaker of all my infant happiness—sole object upon whom, for so many years, have rested all my hopes of future felicity—sister of my heart, disposer of my fate ! is it thus then, we are at length to part ? Is it thus my fairest prospects are to be blasted ? my life, my whole remaining life to be embittered ? Ah ! tell me ; to what is it you sacrifice me ? to a mistaken notion of honour ? a false principle of rectitude ? or is it, as I have but too often,

with shuddering apprehension, dreaded, is it that in reality some fearful antipathy, some unconquerable aversion impels you to a deed of so much inhumanity, and irresistibly drives you from me? Your anger, your bitterest reproaches I may have deserved; but your **HATRED**, Clarentine! Good God! can I have merited that? The idea is terrible! Oh deign, at least, to mitigate its horror by *one* line of comfort, one softening, one alleviating sentence, and I will submit to any thing, even to the rigour of a repulse so firm, and so decisive!

“Again, however, am I deviating from the plain path I had prescribed to myself. My design, dearest Clarentine, was simply to have supplicated your pardon; not to have renewed my offences; and briefly to have acquainted you with the final result of the painful deliberation to which so many hours of my long and melancholy confinement has been dedicated.

“The very instant I am emancipated from the irksome restraint under which it is still thought necessary to detain me, I shall hasten from this house, and return to Oxford. My heart however strongly urges me, previous to that journey, to undertake another—to visit Sidmouth, and bid a long farewell to all its most values, most prizes ‘upon earth! yet this unspeakable gratification—this last and precious indulgence I must forego. The consequences to myself would be too perilous; since, were I again to see you, all my resolution might forsake me—all my impracticable and visionary projects might revive, and upon being, as they infallibly must, succeeded by fresh disappointment, might leave me with even less fortitude, if possible, than now to sustain it, a prey to still greater anguish than any I have yet experienced.

“Hear then, dearest Clarentine, my fixed and latest determination. Conscious that I no longer possess a right to act for myself, that by my own indiscretion I have utterly forfeited every claim to this

inestimable privilege, I purpose immediately writing to Lord Welwyn ; and, if not as a reparation for my ingratitude, at least as a proof of my repentance, faithfully laying before him an exact account of the actual state of my heart, and of the tumultuous passions by which it has been misguided. Let him then decide for himself. If I appear to him wholly undeserving of pardon ; if the duplicity which, in circumstances so trying, I reluctantly permitted myself to use, seems too grossly offensive, and revolts too strongly against his principles and feelings—if, in short, he concludes me utterly unworthy of the honour he once intended me, I shall at least have conducted myself, upon *this* occasion, as became me, and have made one step towards reconciling myself to my own conscience, and effacing the stain, but too justly, affixed to my character. My debts likewise, and all that bears any reference to the pecuniary embarrassments, in which, by my own folly, I have been involved, shall with equal frankness be acknowledged ; I can bear—I will submit to no further concealments ; and should even the severest reception be given to an avowal so unexpected, should the most disdainful rejection of me, *for ever*, be the consequence—certain, however, that the *worst* is known, and that all disguise may be finally thrown off, I shall once more be able to look up in the face of day, grieved for the past, but fearless of the future—and exult in the consciousness of having nothing more to apprehend or conceal !

“ Far from imagining however, that this tardy disclosure will be sufficient, instantly to blot out all my errors, and to give me an immediate right to aspire to a distinction I have hitherto so slightly prized, I fully expect, nay *wish* Lord Welwyn should make trial of my sincerity, should give me time before he comes to any final resolution, to render myself more deserving of his favour, and to obliterate the remem-

brance of the indignity I have so unworthily offered his amiable daughter. Oh! may her distrust never be awakened by knowing with what indifference, not to say repugnance, I have till now looked forward to an union which either respectfully I ought at first to have declined—or joyfully to have at once accepted! My heart tells me, indeed, that to love *her* as I have ardently, fervently adored *Clarentine*, will never be in my power: but gratitude, honour, justice, all urge me to declare, that if *now*, or *ever*, fate should make her mine, the chief study of my life will be how best to promote her happiness, and justify her confidence. Steadily, diligently, to this end, must I however fly you! What serenity could I hope to regain—what resolution expect to preserve, were the passion—the yet unextinguished passion it would then be my duty to eradicate daily—hourly fed, by seeing, by conversing with its object! No; rather let me banish myself from your presence eternally—renounce your society, shun your sight as my greatest bane; since, far easier shall I find it, to support with resignation a *total absence*, than with impunity to permit myself the dangerous indulgence of a few occasional meetings, calculated only to enfeeble and destroy me.

“And now, my *Clarentine*, what remains for me to add? Shall I call for your congratulations that, at length, I have gained courage to form such plans? or shall I again sue for your pity, that what seems so cruel—so contrary to all my better hopes—should thus unavoidably be necessary? Oh tell me, at least, that you approve my purpose—that if scrupulously pursued, it will restore me to your esteem—and doubt not for one instant my firmness, my perseverance!

“I dare take of you no leave, but with a heart overflowing with the tenderest wishes for your welfare and happiness, subscribe myself sincerely yours.

“EDGAR DELMINGTON.”

“Well, Sir,” said Clarentine, when Eltham had read, and returned to her, this letter, “what is your opinion of Sir Edgar now? I flatter myself you will think with me, that he has fixed upon the noblest, and most effectual method of atoning for the past, and of insuring that forgiveness from Lord Welwyn he is so anxious to obtain. Oh, then, deny him not any longer, Mr. Eltham, the esteem to which he has so justly entitled himself! and if, hitherto, you have thought of him with unkindness, prove your own candour, by a generous recantation!”

“My dearest Miss Delmington,” replied Eltham with warmth, “I needed not such an admonition to stimulate me to repent every offensive expression I may have used—every indelicate accusation I may have brought forward, in the course of this conversation. I see,” continued he “that you are an angel! Your firmness I admire, your conduct I revere; and for nothing more strongly do I (likewise permit me to say it) love you, than for the unmerited gentleness with which you have this instant addressed me. As for Sir Edgar, I equally pity and applaud him; and, I assure you, give him credit for far greater self command, nay, even *heroism*, than almost any other young man, attached to such an object, and in such a situation of mind, could have displayed.”

“By proportioning his merit to the supposed difficulty he may have found in resigning *me*,” said Clarentine smiling, “you take from me all power to pursue the subject; else, delighted as I am with the general tenour of his letter, with the openness, the spirit, that breathes in it almost throughout, I could have dwelt upon his praises for ever!”

“And do you not fear,” cried Eltham, “that if so warm is his commendation, I shall again relapse into incredulity and suspicion? again discredit your pretended impartiality, and accuse you of coquetish artifice?”

"O, no," replied Clarentine, gaily, "seconded by this incontrovertible, though silent voucher," pointing to Sir Edgar's letter, "I can fear nothing, and may safely defy your utmost malice."

Here the entrance of Madame d'Arzele put an end to the conversation; and Clarentine, her mind lightened of half its cares, more cheerful and more easy than for a single moment she had hitherto felt since her arrival at Sidmouth, soon after complied with the pressing entreaties of Eltham, and accepting his offer of bringing to her her harp, which stood, as usual, at the further end of the room, played over to him all his favourite airs, and alternately singing, or conversing, evinced, during the remainder of the evening, a degree of animation, as new to him as it was enchanting.

Once whilst she was employed in tuning the instrument, and at the same time gaily talking to Madame d'Arzele, who had been rallying her upon the happy power she seemed, exclusively, to possess, of rendering Mr. Eltham attentive and quiet, he suddenly approached her, and, with that (almost *startling*) energy which was so common to him when anything occasioned his being particularly earnest, abruptly exclaimed—

"Shall I never know, Miss Delmington, what most to guard against when in your presence? One moment, beholding you depressed and unhappy, though grieved you should have cause, I still persuade myself that in any other situation of mind you would be less fascinating, less dangerous; yet, the next instant, if your natural vivacity returns, far from finding this the case, you seem to acquire with it fresh powers of seduction!"

Clarentine, not more astonished than offended at this extraordinary speech, blushed extremely, and turning from him with undissembled vexation, answered—

"Upon my word, Mr. Eltham, such language is too ridiculous! Every strange flight that comes into your head you permit yourself indiscriminately to utter, and perfectly indifferent whether you give pleasure or pain, often occasion real, though I hope unintentional, distress to your auditors."

"Nay, do not," cried Eltham, attempting, but ineffectually, to take her hand, "do not be seriously displeased. Must we always be at variance? perpetually at war?"

"That, Sir," replied Clarentine gravely, "depends wholly upon yourself. Be assured, however, that I will never listen to such exaggerated compliments without taking the liberty, very freely, to express my disapprobation of them."

Eltham would still have rallied her into sentiments of greater indulgence: but though calm, she was firm in keeping to what she had said; and the matter, to her infinite relief, was soon dropt.

It being late when this little dialogue ended, and Eltham knowing Madame d'Arzele commonly retired early, shortly after took leave, and repaired to his own lodging.

BOOK III.

CHAPTER I.

HAVING communicated to Madame d'Arzele the preceding night the contents, as well of Mr. Lenham's, as of Sir Edgar's letter, Clarentine shut herself up the next morning, to give Lady Delmington,

through the medium of Sophia, a general account of both, to solicit her directions concerning the fittest time, and properest method of undertaking her approaching journey, and to assure Sir Edgar, though not in an answer immediately addressed to himself, of the cordial and sincere approbation with which she had read the detail of his laudable and excellent plan.

Scarcely was this task completed, when Mr. Eltham, who regularly called every day about an hour after breakfast, either to attend Clarentine and her friend, if they walked—to sit and read to them if their domestic engagements kept them in the house ; or, if he could do neither, to romp and amuse himself with the children ; sent one of them up to reproach Clarentine for staying at home when the weather was so fine, and to press her earnestly to put on her cloak, and hasten down immediately.

With this request, unwilling herself to lose such a delightful morning, Clarentine readily complied ; and taking the two little girls with her, as their mother just then wished to be excused going, gaily sallied forth.

They had not however proceeded far, though the children, active and fearless, were already out of sight, when, at the very moment, Clarentine partly laughed, and partly teased into compliance, had accepted Eltham's arm, they were met by Mrs. Hertford, and the little stranger who had before accompanied her.

She knew, and instantly accosted them ; enquired of Clarentine how her charming friend did ? apologised for not having sooner called upon them to repeat her thanks for their civility ; and then added, " I left home this morning, however, merely with that design : but as I would not on any account, Miss Delmington, be the occasion of shortening, or retarding your walk, and am not sensible of the least fa-

tigue, I will make half my visit to you while you stay out, and half after you return home."

By no means delighted at this intimation, and amazed that any one whom she was conscious of having received so coldly should condescend thus strangely to force herself upon her, Clarentine only bowed, and soon after they all moved on; Eltham by his countenance and silence betraying his vexation; Mrs. Hertford by her scrutinising observation testifying her curiosity; and Clarentine by her blushes and hesitation evincing her confusion.

After a short and extremely irksome walk, sensible that the longer she protracted her return, the longer she should be exposed to the embarrassing looks of her unwelcome companion, Clarentine proposed going home, and, still closely followed by Mrs. Hertford, the next minute directed her steps towards the house.

The surprise of Madame d'Arzele, on seeing her come back so soon, and come back in such society, was evident and extreme. She looked by turns at each of the party for an explanation; seemed as if she scarcely knew what to say, and, in a very short time, sunk into such total silence, that Clarentine, ill disposed as she felt for such a task, was obliged to take upon herself the whole weight of the conversation; Eltham not choosing to bear any part in it, and Mrs. Hertford herself appearing to think that as the *visitor*, not the *visited*, she likewise might be exempted from making any effort to support it.

The entrance of the children at length afforded Clarentine some relief. Unconscious of their own power, how often in similar circumstances—when conversation falls—the mistress of the house is languid, and her guests completely wearied, do these innocent and happy little beings bring unexpected comfort; reanimate the mother's face; dissipate the stranger's gloom; and, by diverting their attention

from each other, restore a whole party to cheerfulness and ease.

Such now, in some measure, happily proved the case. Mrs. Hertford, though she scarcely noticed the children themselves, smiled at, and commented on the pains Eltham took to make them riotous ; and Madame d'Arzele and Clarentine, in their endeavours to keep them quiet, found, if not an agreeable, at least a lasting source of occupation.

The diversion, however, thus gladly embraced, though it tended to beguile, soon lost its power to charm away the time ; and Clarentine, who from the moment of her entrance had never ceased wondering what could detain her, scarce ever experienced more satisfaction than when at length Mrs. Hertford rose to depart.

She was attended to the door by Eltham, whom she there kept a considerable time in conversation, and to whom Clarentine, as she was returning to the parlour, heard her say—

“ And how long, Sir, have you been acquainted with these ladies ?”

“ Really,” answered Eltham, “ I cannot be very accurate as to the exact time : but why do you enquire ?”

“ Because,” replied she, “ it appears rather extraordinary you should never have mentioned them during the frequent visits you have paid at our house since your arrival.”

“ Why, my dear madam,” cried Eltham, gaily, “ do you think me so superlatively dull, that I can find nothing better to entertain *one* pretty woman with, than encomiums upon *another* ?”

“ I am to infer then,” said Mrs. Hertford, with quickness, “ that to *speak* of Miss Delmington, and to *praise* her, is, with you, the same thing ?”

“ Infer, my dearest creature,” answered he, carelessly, “ what you please, but ask me no more questions, I intreat ; since (pardon me for saying it) I

know you too well to suppose they can either be the result of *chance*, or entirely the effect of *benevolence* !”

Frightened at this daring speech, and dreading to hear its answer, Clarentine now hastily threw open the garden door, and ran into it to avoid, while they continued talking so near the parlour, the possibility of catching another word.

“ Good God ! what must the woman be,” thought she, “ to whom Eltham permits himself to hold such language ? What could be her reason, with so little to say, for making us so long a visit ? Or why, finding us so remiss in attention to her, visit us at all ? I do not understand it ; but I much fear, if Eltham talks to her in the same strain much longer, he will make her the irreconcilable enemy of us both !”

Then recollecting her situation when met by Mrs. Hertford—leaning upon Eltham’s arm—the children, as if purposely, detached from them—and he her only companion ; she blamed herself severely for ever having walked out with him unaccompanied by Madame d’Arzele, and trembled at the opinion such a story, if maliciously reported, might give rise to at Delmington. It now also for the first time occurred to her, that it was wrong to permit Eltham such free and continual access into their house. Though by his own undesigning behaviour, his ease, and good humour, she had been taught almost to forget how lately he had been introduced to her, it was yet but too true that he was still only the acquaintance of a day—had no family connexion, no relationship with her whatever—and that neither his age, or the profligacy imputed to his character, rendered him a fit intimate for a young woman in circumstances such as her’s. Had not Mrs. Harrington already, with the most envenomed rancour, aspersed and vilified her ? and would she not, happy in such an opportunity, seize with avidity every fresh occasion of pouring upon her abuse and odium ?

"Alas!" cried she, "I forgot, or rather till this minute I never was aware, that independent of those evils brought on by our own misconduct, there are others, almost equally dreadful, which are solely the result of our inexperience and want of foresight. Eltham's conversation, whilst confined as it hitherto has been to vague and general subjects, was pleasant to me, and I fancied also, allowable. Polished without affectation, entertaining without sarcasm, and easy without impertinence, I flattered myself, both being free from all design, that we might safely whilst residing in the same vicinity, associate with each other. Too late, however, I have discovered my error; and fatal, if this Mrs. Hertford is as illiberal as she is mysterious, fatal may it prove to me!"

Terrified by this apprehension, and angry with Eltham for having so much contributed to expose her to conjecture, by unnecessarily keeping secret his knowledge of her, although, as was now apparent, a constant visitor at Mrs. Hertford's, she determined in future to keep out of his way as much as possible; to check his assiduities by every means in her power; and above all, earnestly to attempt limiting the number of his visits, and the length of their duration.

Whilst yet occupied in framing plans such as these, Eltham himself joined her, and as he advanced, anxiously called out—

"What, my dearest Miss Delmington, makes you look so thoughtful and so grave?"

Clarentine, unwilling at first to confess to him the cause, looked embarrassed, and hesitated so long what to answer, that concluding her seriousness was the mere effect of accident, he forbore making any further enquiries, and taking her hand, said—

"Come, you want a little dissipation; suppose therefore, we now resume our walk?"

"No, indeed!" cried Clarentine hastily, "I will

neither go out with you again to-day, nor, if I can help it, any other day."

"No!" exclaimed he, much surprised, "And why?"

"I would tell you," answered she, more calmly, "but that I fear your representations, although determined not to suffer myself to be influenced by them."

"Vain indeed should I be," resumed Eltham, evidently piqued by this declaration, "if, after hearing a determination so candid, I hazarded any of the expostulations you so causelessly apprehend. Explain yourself freely, therefore, Miss Delmington."

"I will," said Clarentine, affecting not to seem conscious of his displeasure, "you may remember, Sir, that when I parted from my friends at Delmington, and first came to this place, our acquaintance was scarcely of a week's standing, and in itself of so slight nature, and so accidentally began, that no one could have wondered, had it stopped there, should we mutually have disclaimed any thing beyond the mere knowledge of each other's names and faces. This being the case, what would Lady Delmington, what would Mrs. Harrington conclude, were they to hear, that she, who so lately was almost an entire stranger to you, now authorised your daily attendance at all hours; wandered about the country with you without any other companion; received you early, and detained you late; and was never seen but in your society? I might say, very safely, that your visits are not more meant for me than for Madame d'Arzele: but still, knowing as I do, how seldom she is able, or willing to be of our continual excursions, how much when *you* are below, *she* sits above, and how frequently we have been seen without her, I should find this, I fear, a very insufficient plea, and be extremely ill prepared to answer all the objections that might be made to it. My request to you, therefore, is, Sir,

that for the few days I remain here, you will either make your visits shorter and less constant, or, without being offended, and imagining I mean to shew you any *personal* disrespect, that you will permit me, when you call, to walk out as formerly, by myself, or to sit quietly up-stairs in my own room, and leave to Madame d'Arzele the ceremony of receiving you."

Never was astonishment equal to that which restrained Eltham from interrupting this frank, and to him, extraordinary speech. He looked at her for some time as if doubting the reality of what he had heard, and was preparing to answer her with great irascibility, when recollecting there might be as much of sudden fear as of established dislike in what she had said, he instantly changed his purpose, and hoping to make some advantage of the consternation she had been thrown into, eagerly exclaimed—

"I will consent to any thing, renounce every thing, provided you will but promise, on your arrival in town, to take off this fearful interdiction, and permit me to see, and to visit you there, as if it had never passed!"

"I will make," cried Clarentine, offended and amazed in her turn, "no such promise! you cannot have any right, Mr. Eltham, to exact it; nor to suppose, that in the hope of ensuring a temporary good, I should voluntarily bring upon myself a lasting evil!"

"Why, what an arbitrary little despot you are!" cried he, endeavouring under a semblance of gaiety to disguise the mortification and anger a refusal so steady had given rise to; "disdaining all compromise, rejecting all conditions, what a very tyrant you are become!"

"I am sorry, Sir," said Clarentine, with greater mildness, "you compelled me to it; as we know each other's sentiments, however, now, there can be no further necessity for my stay, and therefore I shall wish you good morning."

“ Why whither are you then going ? ”

“ To my own room, Sir. I have a letter to finish before the post goes out, and no time, I believe, to lose.”

She then hastily left him, while yet too much confounded to have power to stop her, and ran up stairs.

CHAPTER II.

WHEN Clarentine and Madame d'Arzele met at dinner, the former, with her accustomed sincerity, related all that had passed in her own mind previous to her conference with Eltham, as well as the particulars and result of that conference itself. When she had ended her account,

“ I may, perhaps,” added she, “ have been rather too plain with him ; but it is impossible to recollect the strange engagement into which he would have persuaded me to enter, without wondering he should not himself have foreseen the retort it must occasion.”

“ From any one else, my dear Clarentine,” said Madame d'Arzele, “ he *would* have foreseen it : but you and I have treated him with too much indulgence, have literally spoilt him. I am glad, therefore, with all my heart you have had the courage to put a little check upon him ; and by no means sorry to find the wearisome length of his never-ending visits is likely to be somewhat moderated ; though as the more ostensible *mistress of the house*, I could never have permitted myself to give him such a hint, without running the risk of offending him for life.”

Then recurring to what Clarentine had said relating to her fears, lest the misrepresentations Mrs. Hertford's prying curiosity shewed her so fully prepared to make, should reach Delmington, and gain credit there, Madame d'Arzele besought her to ex-

plain her reasons for having, as she supposed, invited her in ; and gave the most ludicrous account of the consternation and dismay with which she saw her enter.

Clarentine readily satisfied her as to the share she had borne in that transaction, and briefly informed her of every particular that had attended their meeting ; after which by mutual consent, a different subject was started, and both sought, as much as it was in their power, to drive the unpleasant occurrences of the morning from their thoughts.

The whole afternoon and evening passed, and Eltham never appeared ; the succeeding day elapsed, and still his absence continued. Clarentine then began to be frightened, and half wished—lest in trying to avert *one* evil she had brought upon herself *another*, and made him an enemy who had before been a friend—she had either spoken more cautiously, or wholly forborne speaking at all, contenting herself with avoiding him without assigning any reason for it ; yet this, impracticable, and self-willed as he was, she believed would have been almost impossible ; since go whither she would, unless formally prohibited, he would have insisted upon following her, and deny him as often as she pleased, he would have called again the next hour. Discarding, therefore, all useless repinings, and convinced in her own mind, that however impolitic, what she had done was, at least, candid and honest, she acquitted herself of any wrong intentions, and determined quietly to await the event.

A letter from Sophia, which arrived the following morning, contributed more than ever to confirm her in these sentiments, and to relieve her from all remaining uneasiness respecting what had passed.

That affectionate and excellent girl began, in Lady Delmington's as well as her own name, by thanking her most warmly for the confidence and kindness

with which she had acknowledged to them her receipt of Sir Edgar's letter; and for the unreserved and satisfactory account she had given of its contents. Her mother, she added, since its communication no longer appeared the same woman; all her doubts were banished, all her alarm subsided; and in consequence, she had fully authorised Sophia to inform her, that henceforward, every objection to her writing publicly and openly to the whole family, and to Lady Julia also, was for ever at an end.

Speaking next of her brother, she said he was to set out for Oxford the following week; having within the last four or five days amended so rapidly, that it was no longer deemed necessary to delay his journey.

"Instead of writing, however," proceeded she, "as he told you he would, he yesterday had a long, and I doubt not most interesting conference with Lord Welwyn himself, who kindly called in the course of the morning to enquire personally after him. I have not heard the particulars of what passed between them; but if I may judge by my brother's recruited spirits, and by his Lordship's own cordiality at parting, they were only such as to give us all satisfaction and comfort.

"Besides, Edgar, who used so sedulously to avoid Lady Julia, now seizes every opportunity of throwing himself, without affectation, in her way; and for *him*, really makes a very assiduous courtier; a change her Ladyship appears by no means either displeased with, or insensible to!

"But *apropos* to Lady Julia, my dear Clarentine, she complains much of your determined silence, and seems extremely hurt by it. Pray write to her very soon. She knows of your impending journey, and has been told *whom* you are to live with, and why you leave us, which, (according to *our* account) is because—let me see; I have almost forgot my les-

son!—O, because Mr. Lenham himself desired it; and Mr. Lenham was the great friend of the late Mrs. Somerset, and may therefore reasonably be supposed to feel much interested about her favourite niece and early *protégée*.

“ Now remember you do not spoil this pretty story, by telling more than you ought to do! I assure you it cost *us* much trouble and pains to invent.

“ But stop—before I proceed further, let me acquaint you with a piece of good news, which will, I know, rejoice you. Edgar has acknowledged all his debts, as he no doubt informed you was his design, (though you prudently forbore touching upon *that* subject in your joint letter to my mother and me) not only to Lord Welwyn, but to her also; and she, (my mother) confessing as much to Mrs. Harrington, that incomprehensible person, in a fit of, scarce credible, munificence, undertook to discharge them entirely herself, as a testimony of the high approbation with which she honours his present conduct. Now tell me, if you dare, that miracles are over!

“ With regard, my love, to the directions you ask concerning your journey, my mother is of opinion you ought by no means to travel so far alone, and has therefore devised what, I hope, you will think a very comfortable method of obviating this difficulty.

“ Our good and worthy old housekeeper, Mrs. Newnham, has a daughter in London whom she has long been very anxious to visit. My mother knowing this, and at the same time being thoroughly satisfied she could not entrust you to a properer person, has commissioned me to tell you, that if, on Monday next, you can proceed as far as Exeter with Madame d’Arzele’s woman, Mrs. Newnham shall meet you there, at the principal inn, and travel on with you the rest of the way. Write therefore immediately to Mr. Lenham to inform him of this arrangement—an arrangement which, however *you* may, and, I flatter my-

self, *will* approve—it grieves *me* to be obliged, with such methodical *sang-froid*, to write about.

“I read to Edgar the friendly little message you sent to him, and he seemed much gratified and affected by it; yet, like a true encroacher, could not help confessing he should have been still better pleased had it been written immediately to *himself*. So, however, would *not* my mother: and therefore it is quite as well as it is.

“But my dearest Clarentine I must now bid you farewell. I shall write to you again very soon, and hope to hear from you as early as you can, after your arrival in London.

“Heaven bless and preserve you—grant you a safe and pleasant journey—a cordial reception—good spirits and good health!

“Adieu; and believe me, with the truest and warmest affection,

“Yours ever,

“S. DELMINGTON.”

“P. S. O, but I had almost forgot! It is reported here, by one of his own men, whom he lately sent back to Welwyn Park, that the sage, the modest, the humble Mr. Eltham, has taken a lodging, at Sidmouth, *close to yours*—that he walks out *tete-a-tete* with you every day—that in an evening you spend whole hours singing and playing to him—and finally that he almost *lives* at your house! Take care, take care, my dearest girl! scandal and defamation are very prevalent in these evil days, and many are the evil tongues you have to guard against!—Send Eltham about his business as soon as you can—and if he must visit you, give my compliments to him, and tell him to wait till you get to Mr. Lenham’s; for Madame d’Arzele is *beaucoup trop jeune et jolie*, to make a proper Duenna for you!—Adieu!”

Painfully meditating upon its contents, Clarentine yet held this letter in her hand, when Eltham himself opened the parlour door, and entered. He had taken a circuit on purpose to come in at the back part of the house unseen by the ladies, and in his way, meeting with no one to announce him, (a ceremony indeed he had of late seldom given himself the trouble to observe) had proceeded boldly forward till he reached the usual sitting room, where he, very justly, concluded himself secure of finding the object of his search.

He was beginning, though in a tone less gay and animated than usual, to address her, when Clarentine, abruptly starting up—the caution she had so recently received giving additional celerity to her motions, flew towards an opposite door with a view of making her escape, without uttering a syllable.

Eltham, however, saw her design, and springing after her, in astonishment inexpressible, he took her hand, and as he led her back, fixing his penetrating eyes upon her downcast face, with a mixture of curiosity and resentment—

“Good God!” he exclaimed “whence this inconceivable, this extraordinary behaviour? Do I dream? or are you really the same Miss Delmington—the same friendly, amiable, and unaffected creature, who so lately welcomed my approach with smiles and with good humour?—Who—”

“Mr. Eltham,” interrupted Clarentine, struggling to disengage her hand, “let me pass I beseech you!—if you are offended, if I appear capricious and ill-bred, I am sorry for it: but I have reasons, indispensable reasons for what I do, and cannot suffer you to detain me an instant longer!”

“Is it possible then, you should imagine,” cried Eltham, still opposing her retreat, and stedfastly gazing at her—“I can part with you whilst in a state of such suspense? For worlds would I not neglect this opportunity, the *only* one you may ever again afford me, of bringing you to an explanation; of en-

quiring into the true cause of a change so sudden, and so mortifying! Have I not punctually, scrupulously observed your last injunctions? abstained three whole days from venturing near the house? and can you still wish to fly me? still drive me from you?"

Clarentine, ashamed, distressed and irresolute, hung down her head in total silence, unable, without acknowledging it was to the advice of Sophia her increased reserve was owing, to account for a conduct, she could not but allow he had so much reason to be displeased with; and equally unable to frame any other excuse that should appear at all plausible to a man whose penetration she so much dreaded, and whose enquiries were so pointed.

Whilst with averted looks, therefore, thus hesitating and thus confused she stood, Eltham still vainly urging her to speak, a sudden end was put to her difficulties and deliberations, by the abrupt appearance of the maid of the house, who, half opening the door called out——

“ Miss—a lady——”

And immediately drawing back, gave place to Mrs. Hertford, who the next moment hastily entered.

Eltham, at this sight, muttering between his teeth an indistinct imprecation, and instantly dropping the reluctant hand he had so long detained, bowed coldly and stiffly to the fair intruder, and walked sullenly to the window; whilst Clarentine scarcely less provoked, and infinitely more abashed, stammered, blushed, and looked so guilty and so conscious, that an observer of far less discernment, or far greater candour than Mrs. Hertford, might very naturally have put the same construction upon what she saw, which that lady instantly, and unhesitatingly, thought she was authorised to put upon it herself.

Dissembling her sentiments however, and approaching Clarentine with perfect ease and composure, she took her hand with the intimacy of established friend-

ship, and enquiring, in a tone of far greater complacency than that in which she had addressed her during her last visit, after Madame d'Arzele, then added, without waiting for an answer—

“ I understand, my dear Miss Delmington, you are upon the point of quitting Sidmouth as well as myself ; will you therefore excuse the liberty I take, if I venture to inquire how you propose travelling, and whether it would be agreeable to you to accept a seat in my uncle's carriage, in preference to undertaking the journey alone ? ”

The extreme surprise this unexpected proposal excited ; the sudden start it occasioned from Eltham, and the rapid succession of new ideas to which it gave rise in Clarentine, had the happiest effect upon her spirits ; and instantly dissipating every trace of that painful embarrassment under which she had, the moment before, so severely laboured, revived and re-animated her sufficiently, to enable her, the next minute, without pause or hesitation, firmly, but, at the same time, with extreme good breeding, to answer—

“ Your offer, madam, does me infinite honour, and I should have accepted it with great pleasure, had I not this very morning received a letter from Delmington, containing the fullest directions, as well concerning the time at which I am to set out, as the companion with whom I am to travel, and the exact route we are to take.”

“ And when, then, may I ask,” cried Eltham, abruptly turning round, “ do you set out ? ”

Clarentine, by no means anxious to answer this inquiry, attempted to turn it off with a laugh, and gaily replied—

“ You and I have been quarrelling this morning, you know, Mr. Eltham ; and therefore, as a little punishment for your curiosity, I shall take advantage of our not having yet *made it up*, and like children in the same circumstances, *turn sulky*, and refuse to answer you.”

"An admirable expedient!" cried he, "I give you infinite credit for its ingenuity! This is what may truly be called *turning a quarrel to good account*. Pray where did you learn this politic art?"

"*Necessity*, I suppose, taught it me," answered Clarentine laughing, "for it is not one of those qualifications I should be willing to ascribe to *Nature*."

"Consider then, how much you are indebted to *me*, as the prime agent of this all-inspiring necessity, for calling forth such talents!"

"About as much," resumed Clarentine with quickness, "as any other persecuted being is, to the tormentor that stimulates its exertions by first awakening its fears!"

"I may then really triumph in the certainty of having made you afraid of me?"

"Not absolutely; since I can yet only do you the honour to acknowledge that you are the *cause*, but by no means the *object* of my fears?"

Then observing that Mrs. Hertford sat listening to all that passed with the most earnest attention, she felt anxious to give an immediate turn to the conversation; and for that purpose addressing herself to her, without giving Eltham time to pursue the subject, she said—

"May I take the liberty, madam, of asking how you first heard of my intended removal? I should be curious to know who it is, that in this place thinks so insignificant a being as I am, of sufficient consequence to take the trouble of enquiring into any of my actions."

"My intelligence," answered Mrs. Hertford, "was not procured here, but came immediately from London, in a letter I yesterday received from Miss Barclay, the young lady, who, with her mother, now resides at Mr. Lenham's."

Amazed to find her so well acquainted with names she had always so carefully avoided mentioning,

either before her or Eltham, Clarentine, unable to command her first emotion, hastily exclaimed—"Good God!"

"Then as suddenly recollecting herself, with more composure, added, "You are well acquainted with Miss Barclay then, madam? Is she amiable?"

"Yes, extremely," answered Mrs. Hertford.

"And pray," resumed Clarentine, hesitating and fearful, yet anxious, before she herself became a member of it, to know exactly upon what footing Mrs. Hertford was in Mr. Lenham's family; "Pray, madam, may I without impertinence inquire, whether you have been intimate long with this young lady, and whether you are also acquainted with the excellent Mr. Lenham?"

"With the latter," answered Mrs. Hertford, "but very slightly. Mrs. Castleton, a particular friend of mine, has a boy, the brother of that little girl you have seen with me here, under his care, and when she has called to see the child, I have occasionally accompanied her, and by that means obtained a trifling knowledge of him. With Miss Barclay, however, I have been in habits of confidence, and in constant correspondence these four or five years."

This answer, circumstantial as it was, still but imperfectly satisfied Clarentine. There were yet a thousand questions she wished to ask, a thousand doubts she longed to have explained, which, however, her delicacy and fear of offending withheld her from uttering. That a woman, whom Eltham allowed himself to excite such suspicions of, to whom he ventured to speak so cavalierly, and who to Clarentine herself appeared so ill-formed to excite a lasting friendship; that such a woman should be the chosen intimate of so near a relation of the respectable Mr. Lenham's, seemed incomprehensible! Much, however, did the circumstance, extraordinary as it was, tend to eradicate, or at least diminish, the prejudice

she had hitherto harboured against her ; and naturally candid, disposed to see every thing in the most favourable light ; and, as all ingenuous mind are, averse to crediting the *worst* in a *doubtful* case, she persuaded herself to believe, that Eltham had either been grossly misinformed, or else influenced by private pique in all that he had insinuated.

When therefore after a visit, like both her former ones, of considerable length, Mrs. Hertford rose to take leave, Clarentine, whose feeling and excellent heart reproached her for her past coldness, and urged her to make reparation for it, went up to her, and with infinite sweetness renewing her thanks for the obliging offer that had brought her, apologised for never having waited upon her during the time she had been at Sidmouth, and expressed great concern that it would now, owing to the shortness of her stay, be wholly out of her power.

“ I hope then,” said Mrs. Hertford, with a look that shewed her much pleased, “ you will make me amends when you get to town ? ”

So saying, she made something between a *bow* and a *curtsey* to Eltham, shook hands with Clarentine, left her compliments for Madame d’Arzele, and with an air of even girlish vivacity hastened away.

The moment she was gone, Eltham, as it was evident, would have poured upon Clarentine a torrent of questions, not wholly unmixed with reproaches for a reception his pride still so much resented, had she allowed him opportunity ; but aware of his design, and equally averse to hearing either the one or the other, she industriously evaded giving him any satisfactory information, and sought by so many little artifices to elude his interrogatories, and give the conversation a general turn, that although he could not again, with any appearance of reason, complain of her, as she neither testified any peculiar anxiety to escape from him, or any degree of reserve that could in com-

mon sense offend him, he very soon lost all patience, and determined upon quitting her, to seek elsewhere that intelligence, which every instant increased his desire of obtaining.

As soon as he had left her, hastening up to Madame d'Arzele to consult with her about the plan mentioned by Sophia, relative to her journey as far as Exeter, and to solicit her acquiescence to it, she, the next minute, sat down, first to inform Lady Delmington of the success of her application, and then, to apprise Mr. Lenham of the exact time at which he might expect her. With regard to the charge, however, concerning Eltham, as she wished to discuss that subject with Sophia only, and was by no means certain her mother knew of the reports that had been circulated respecting him, she deferred saying any thing that could lead to that circumstance, as well as writing to Lady Julia, till after her arrival in London; when for the one she would have more leisure, and for the other more materials.

CHAPTER III.

THE morning at length arrived, so much dreaded by Madame d'Arzele, and so dejectedly anticipated by Clarentine, which, after a residence together that had been productive of so much comfort to both; that had so closely united them to each other, and established a habit of confidence between them so grateful to their hearts, was destined to separate and divide them. They parted with tears on both sides; and with the sincerest expressions of attachment, earnestly renewed their mutual promises of writing with punctuality and diligence.

At Exeter, whither Clarentine was conveyed in less than three hours, she found the good Mrs. Newn-

ham, who had slept there the preceding night in readiness, at the Inn door, to receive and welcome her. They repaired together into the house, where, after taking some refreshment, Clarentine hastily wrote a few lines to thank Madame d'Arzele for the attendance of her woman ; whom, sending for into the parlour, she very generously rewarded for her trouble, and then dismissed, with a thousand kind messages to her mistress, and a thousand affectionate remembrances to the children.

When this business was concluded, she turned to Mrs. Newnham, and telling her she was ready to set out, asked how they were to travel.

"My lady's opinion ma'am," answered Mrs. Newnham, "was, that your safest method, as you have no man servant to attend you, would be to wait here till the Plymouth stage arrives, and if there is room, to proceed the rest of the way, or at least as far as Salisbury in that ; there, if you find yourself fatigued, we may sleep to-night, and continue our journey in the coach that sets out from thence, to-morrow."

Clarentine immediately agreed to this plan : and on enquiry, finding the stage was expected in every minute, held herself in readiness to get into it, and desired the waiters would let her know as soon as it arrived.

Whilst this was passing, Mrs. Newnham had been giving orders in the passage concerning the baggage she had brought with her ; and was standing to see it all conveyed down stairs out of her own room, whither she had insisted upon its being deposited the night before ; when Clarentine, drawn to the door by the noise and bustle of this removal, started with amazement at the number of trunks and boxes she beheld, and hastily exclaimed—

"Why, my dear Mrs. Newnham, you have made preparations for a very long absence ! What stay do you purpose to make in London ?"

"Bless you, ma'am!" cried the the good woman, "these things are not a quarter of them mine; they chiefly belong to you."

"To me!" thought Clarentine, sighing, "Ah! then, I am an *outcast* indeed!"

She drew nearer to the place where they stood, however, and examining the directions, saw, with increased concern, as a proof of the long exile to which she was doomed, that they were actually almost all addressed to her, in Lady Delmington's own hand, at the Rev. Mr. Lenham's, and by their size and number seemed to contain not only her books, the repeated gifts of Mr. Somerset, but every thing else of value that she had left behind her.

The sight, from the crowd of distressing reflections to which it gave birth, made her melancholy, and turning away with an aching heart, she went back into the room, where, perceiving a newspaper lying upon the window seat, she took it up till the coach arrived, and sat down to look it over.

One of the first articles that caught her attention was the following:—

"A few days ago died, at his seat in Northamptonshire, Thomas Somerset, Esq. Member of Parliament for Higham Ferrers, and one of the wealthiest private gentlemen in the county. His son, a very gallant and distinguished young officer in the navy, and sole heir to all his father's property, is shortly expected in England, after a long station in the West Indies."

Though it is not to be supposed the news of a man's death by whom she had been so cruelly neglected, whose general character was so unamiable, and who had long been such a stranger to her sight, could very deeply affect her, yet, as all unexpected intelligence of mortality usually does, at the first moment, it shocked, if it did not grieve her, and led to such a train of mournful reflections upon the subject

of all the infantine connexions she had thus early lost, that, depressed as she was before, the tears started into her eyes, and she laid the paper down unable to proceed.

The entrance into the inn yard of the coach she had been expecting now, however, afforded her some relief, and by directing her attention to the more immediate concerns of the moment, contributed to dissipate the sadness with which she was oppressed. Mrs. Newnham instantly hastened out to the driver, and to endeavour to secure the two vacant places she required; which having happily effected; she presently returned to announce her success to her young fellow-traveller; with whom, in a short time afterwards, she ascended the carriage, and drove away.

Loaded as it was with *outside* passengers, fortunately for Clarentine, it contained but one in the *inside*, except herself and Mrs. Newnham. That one, in appearance scarcely superior to a common sailor, coarse, rough, and sturdy, was yet, to his present companions, at least, perfectly inoffensive; seeming far more inclined to sleep than to intrude upon them his conversation; and, after the first *full stare* with which (not without betraying some indications of surprise and complacency) he favoured Clarentine, evincing no further inclination to observe or molest her.

Becoming, therefore, shortly familiarised to his uncouth aspect, which, on her first entrance, had startled and almost terrified her, Clarentine, whose thoughts now again involuntarily reverted to the intelligence respecting Mr. Somerset she had so accidentally met with, communicated it in a low voice to Mrs. Newnham, and expressed the deepest concern for the melancholy surprise, that, on his return after so long an absence, awaited his son; a son, she added, who, however unlike his father, would still, she was persuaded, feel the sincerest sorrow at a death so sudden and so unexpected.

To this, Mrs. Newnham, although a good and a well principled woman, found some difficulty to agree; not thinking it possible, nay, even natural, that the best of sons should experience any real grief at the loss of such a father.

"You know not, my dear Miss Clarentine," continued she, "you know not what shocking accounts I have heard of his selfishness, his illiberality, and his total want of affection; nor how often I have been assured that, but for his pay as being in the navy, Captain Somerset—"

At the mention of Somerset's name, the sailor who sat opposite to Clarentine, and who for some time had been lounging back in the coach, his eyes entirely closed, his arms folded, and his head reclined upon his breast, as if sunk in a heavy stupor, suddenly bent forward with a look of mingled incredulity and amazement, and earnestly fixing his eyes on Mrs. Newnham, bluntly exclaimed—

"What's that—what's all that there you're saying? Do *you* know Capt. Somerset?"

"Yes," answered she, half smiling, "I do know one Capt. Somerset, but perhaps not the same you mean."

"Was his name William?" enquired the sailor, "was he commander of the ——— man of war?"

"He was," replied Mrs. Newnham.

"Why then, by jingo!" resumed he, rubbing his hands with an air of infinite glee, "I've got into right good sort of company! Captain Somerset's was the first ship I ever went on board of, and a plaguy time I thought I should have on't, for I was no younker even then, but a great lubberly lout that knew no more of the matter than an infant, and expected a cat-o'-nine-tails across my back every instant. Ne'ertheless, he bore with me kindly and patiently; gave me time to learn my business, and encouragement to do my duty—and has made me take such a liking to

a seaman's life, that as long as there's a ship afloat, I'll ne'er turn my mind to any other."

Clarentine, much pleased with the honest frankness she began to discover in her new acquaintance, and happy to embrace such an opportunity of learning a few of the particulars of Somerset's professional conduct, now joined in the conversation, and without discovering her near affinity to him, obtained from her communicative companion an account, that affected as much as it delighted her. The character he gave of his late commander, (for he began by saying he was no longer in Capt. Somerset's ship,) was that of a man equally remarkable for humanity and for courage; one who in the midst of danger was dauntless and collected; in the hour of success, placable and generous; and in the day of security, mild, patient, and considerate.

Praise such as this—so zealous, yet so disinterested, drew tears from Clarentine's eyes; increased, if possible, the esteem, admiration, and affection she had always felt for its object; and made her proud of acknowledging her connexion with a man whose virtues, she thought, reflected such honour upon all who were allied to him.

The first instant she spoke, confessed herself to be so well acquainted with Somerset, so nearly related to him, the voice, demeanour, and whole countenance of the pleased, yet astonished sailor, underwent a total revolution. Respect and deference took the place of his former roughness and familiarity; he seemed from that moment to look upon her with a species of benevolent affection, and never afterwards addressed her but with the humblest civility and gentleness.

At M——, where they stopped to dine, and where also their fellow-traveller took leave of them, Clarentine and Mrs. Newnham had scarcely alighted and advanced three steps towards the room that was allotted to them, when, from above, in an accent equal-

ly well known to both, a man's voice was heard impatiently calling out—

“Waiter! send my servant up to me, I have been ringing for him this half hour.”

“O, good God!” softly exclaimed Clarentine, precipitating her pace as she spoke, and mechanically seizing hold of Mrs. Newnham's arm, “Mr. Eltham is here! For the world I would not have him see me!”

The evil, however, was already done. Eltham, whilst leaning over the banisters, had caught a transient view of her, and flying impetuously down the stairs, reached the room she meant to take refuge in almost at the same instant she entered it herself.

“So, my dear Miss Delmington,” cried he, triumphantly addressing her, “accident has for once been my friend, and, notwithstanding your barbarous reserve upon the subject of your journey the last time I had the honour of seeing you, has given me the opportunity I so much wished for, of offering you my services upon the road, and of attending you, (at a distance, however humble,) up to town!”

“I am sorry,” said Clarentine coldly, “that Mr. Eltham, who, no doubt, so well knows the value of every obligation he confers, should, upon this occasion, have made choice of one, so ill disposed to accept his offers, or even to thank him for his intentions, as I am.”

“The mortifying ungraciousness of this reply,” cried Eltham, attempting to laugh, yet evidently much piqued, “might have succeeded much better some time ago; but of late, Miss Delmington, you have accustomed me so often to the same kind of severity, that I begin to feel *hardened*, and shall very shortly become callous to all reproof whatever.”

“That,” said Clarentine, “I can easily believe; and only wish it were in my power, with equal facility, to become callous to unprovoked—”

Impertinence she would have added, but checking herself in time, left the sentence unfinished, and turned to the window half angry at her own petulance, and half terrified at the effect it might produce.

Before Eltham could speak to her again, however, the servant he had been enquiring for, made his appearance, and soon after they both left the room.

"Thank heaven!" said Clarentine, when they were gone, "I now begin to breathe! But, my dear Mrs. Newnham, if you have any pity, endeavour to hasten our dinner as much as you can, that we may, if possible, get away before Mr. Eltham returns."

Mrs. Newnham, though it was evident she longed to make a thousand observations, and, no doubt also, to ask a thousand questions, immediately obeyed; and as on her re-entrance she was accompanied by a waiter who staid in the room the whole time they were at table, she found it absolutely impossible to utter one direct enquiry; and all others Clarentine easily evaded.

Their hasty meal was scarcely over, when notice was brought that the coach was ready.

Clarentine, eager to be gone, instantly arose, and having discharged the reckoning, hurried out with the utmost expedition, internally congratulating herself upon her good fortune in thus escaping a second interview with Eltham.

At the coach door, however, what was her surprise and chagrin again to behold him!

"Here still?" cried she, with undissembled vexation.

"Yes," replied he, smiling as he handed her in, "here still!"

Then likewise assisting Mrs. Newnham to mount the steep ladder that served instead of steps, the next moment he ascended after her, and bade the coachman drive on.

"Drive on?" repeated Clarentine, "No, no, im-

possible! you do not mean to go with us, Mr. Eltham?"

"I do indeed," returned he, enjoying her consternation, "my man could procure me no post-horses, and I am in haste to get to town."

Clarentine every instant more disgusted at his dauntless assurance, and firmly persuaded his station at that inn on her arrival was the effect of a concerted plan, (formed in consequence of his having, by some unknown means, discovered the day on which she meant to quit Sidmouth, and the conveyance by which she was to travel) now determined, in order to prove to him, at least, the seriousness of her resentment, to observe the steadiest silence she could the whole way, and resolutely to avoid giving him any further excuse to provoke, or reproach her.

Eltham, however, was not of a disposition long to suffer her to maintain her purpose. Anxious to learn the cause of the late, and inexplicable change in her behaviour towards him, he began by complaining in the strongest terms of the manifest injustice with which she had treated him—protesting that he was wholly unconscious, when her reserve first began, of having in the slightest degree merited her displeasure; and could no otherwise account for it, than by supposing she had been prejudiced against him by the family at Delmington, and taught by them to assume that coldness and distrust he so deeply lamented.

To this, though by no means pleased at his harbouring such a suspicion, Clarentine, firm to her first intention, made no reply—and Eltham, after vainly waiting some time for an answer, thus went on—

"As my stay in London will be very short, and I have promised to return to Welwyn park as soon as the shooting season commences, my first business will be, on my arrival there, to get this matter satisfactorily cleared up. Sir Edgar, it is true," added he, "will not at that time be with his family, but

should every other member of it deny the charge, my conjectures will know where to rest, and the affair may easily be decided by means of writing to him to beg he will appoint some convenient place where we can discuss it."

Shocked and amazed at this alarming threat, yet unwilling to believe it could have any serious meaning, Clarentine now found herself compelled to speak, and with great earnestness said—

"Can you then, Mr. Eltham, after the conversation that so lately passed between us on this subject,—when I frankly communicated to you my reasons for requesting you to discontinue your visits at Madame d'Arzele's—can you still be unreasonable enough to require a further vindication? to discredit all I said? and to entertain suspicions so unworthy, and so ill grounded?"

"Had Miss Delmington," replied he coolly, "condescended, after that conversation, to account for the very extraordinary behaviour that followed it—had she informed me what were her motives, on my next visit, for so abruptly flying my presence the instant I entered the house—had she, in short, uniformly treated me with candour and openness, those doubts, those suspicions, had never been excited. As it is—since by persuasion and entreaty I have so ill succeeded, I must either apply elsewhere, or determine to persecute and haunt her, till in *self-defence*, she is compelled to answer me."

Then observing that poor Mrs. Newnham, notwithstanding the eager curiosity with which she had attended to the opening of this dialogue, had now, however, overpowered by fatigue, fallen into a profound sleep, he lowered his voice, and thus, with a significant smile, continued—

"Were I permitted to advise in such a case, I would caution my dear Miss Delmington not to persevere too long in her present plan, lest, driving me to ex-

tremities, she should urge me to declare open war against her, and at once to proclaim myself her lover and her persecutor ! Aye," continued he, seeing her start and turn pale, "you may look frightened, but such I protest to you will be the case. I cannot, I *will not* be to you as a common acquaintance ! Either then accept me for your friend—restore me to that degree of confidence with which you honoured me during the early period of your residence at Sidmouth, or, as I said before, make me a passionate, but a selfish—a designing lover !"

During this speech, Clarentine, aghast and dismayed, stared with unutterable astonishment at the insulting speaker, who, satisfied with having so unequivocally explained himself, very composedly folded his arms the instant he paused, and threw himself back in his seat, exultingly contemplating the consternation he had occasioned. She recollected, with trembling apprehension, how totally, for the present at least, she was in his power ; and dreading still further to irritate him by reproaches, made a faint attempt, though filled with the utmost indignation, to soften and appease him. The words, however, died on her lips ; she stammered—hesitated—and the next moment burst into tears.

Eltham at this sight anxiously leaned forward—fixed his eyes on her face with an expression of concern and surprise, and then seizing her hand, passionately exclaimed—

"Dear, lovely Clarentine ! it is yet time to retract ! Tell me but that you will forgive me—allow me but to hope my repentance may be followed by your returning friendship, and I here for ever abjure all the cursed menaces I so madly uttered !"

Clarentine, revived by this assurance, now ventured to look up, and smiling through her tears, said—

"Were I, Mr. Eltham, as vindictive as *you* have shewn yourself, I should not so readily pardon the terror and amazement into which you have thrown

me. To prove to you, however, the difference there is between us, I accept your terms, and agree to an immediate peace."

"This generous forgiveness," cried Eltham, kissing her hand, "is, I acknowledge, very ill deserved—but since it not only proves your placability, but ensures my warmest gratitude, let it be as permanent as I hope it is sincere."

"You distrust its sincerity, I perceive," said Clarentine, "and with some reason, after all the strange things you have uttered; be assured, however, that upon one only condition, you may securely rely upon the good faith with which I mean to observe our treaty."

"I dare not," replied Eltham, "after the mercy you have exercised towards me, refuse subscribing to that condition, whatever it may be; and yet I almost dread to hear it."

"Believe me," said Clarentine, "you have no cause. It is simply this—that immediately on our arrival at Salisbury, you will order a post-chaise to be ready to-morrow morning to convey you separately the rest of the way to London; and afterwards excuse my seeing you again till I am fixed at Mr. Lenham's. Do not," added she, seeing he hesitated, "do not, I beseech you, deny me so trifling a favour, lest you oblige me to question *your* sincerity, as you appear to have questioned *mine*."

After a short internal deliberation, Eltham, at length, acceded to this compromise, and during the remainder of their route together, the most uninterrupted harmony subsisted between them.

Yet Clarentine, notwithstanding the temporising meekness with which she had been reduced to submit to his unpardonable presumption, was not of a disposition to think of it lightly, or lightly to forget it. Retired as had been her past life, she still was sufficiently acquainted with the rules and customs of

society, to know how to estimate his conduct; and at once to perceive and feel its impropriety. That her unprotected state should be such as to expose her so peculiarly to suffer by it, she deeply lamented; and shrunk with timid despondency from a world, in which it was likely her poverty and dependence might lead to a repetition of such humiliating treatment. Still, however, she meant punctually to fulfil her promise, and as she had agreed, occasionally to receive him after her arrival in town; but never when alone, or when unsupported by the presence of some person whose age, or situation, would ensure deference and command respect.

CHAPTER IV.

IT was so late when the coach drove into the city of Salisbury, that Clarentine, wearied and dispirited by the reluctant exertions she had made to appear easy and cheerful during the latter part of the evening, felt anxious to retire for the night the instant she alighted; being told, however, that it would take some time to prepare a room for her reception, she submitted to necessity with the best grace she could; and whilst Mrs. Newnham went up-stairs with the chambermaid, to see that every thing was properly arranged, consented, at Eltham's recommendation, to order tea in preference to the more substantial repast that had been set before them; but which she had declined partaking.

Drawing a chair to the side table on which the tea equipage had been placed, and seating himself opposite to her, Eltham, as soon as the waiter left the room, said—

“Pray, Miss Delmington, when is Captain Somerset expected in England?”

"Would I could tell!" answered Clarentine with earnestness.

"You speak feelingly upon the subject," returned Eltham gravely, "and yet, you were so young when he last embarked, that you cannot retain much recollection of him?"

"Oh, do not think so!" resumed she, with quickness; "he left an impression upon my memory never to be erased. Good, noble, and benevolent as he is, who that has once known, can cease to remember, or cease to honour him?"

Eltham, inexpressibly struck by the energy and warmth with which this was uttered, remained thoughtful and silent for some minutes after she paused, attentively regarding her; then resuming all his wonted impetuosity, he abruptly cried out—

"With a heart so alive to sentiments of gratitude and admiration, why—oh, why, cruel Clarentine! are you thus inaccessible to love! Tell me," added he, leaning forward, and fixing her yet more intently, "tell me, why should you drive me from you? Why should we ever part?"

"Mr. Eltham," replied Clarentine, greatly alarmed at this returning vehemence, "is it generous, is it manly, to take advantage of the defenceless situation in which I am now placed, thus to harass and oppress me? Oh, do not force me to hate you! do not oblige me to recal that pardon you seemed so anxious to obtain; and instead of the friend you taught me to expect, compel me to look upon you as the most cruel of enemies!"

"By heaven," exclaimed he, with fervour, "you do me wrong! Friendship—nay, even love itself, were too cold a name by which to express the sentiment I feel for you! I offer you my heart; I dedicate to you my fortune and my life! You are the most fascinating, the most lovely of human beings, and whilst I have breath, I will protect, cherish, and

adore you!—Dearest, gentlest Clarentine! do not repulse—do not drive me to desperation!”

Struggling to withdraw her hand, which during this speech, he had seized, and forcibly detained, Clarentine, unable to refrain from tears, dejectedly said—

“In pity, in humanity, spare me, Mr. Eltham! I am not in spirits to support all this; you know not how you wound, how you distress me!—Oh! had you the feeling heart of that generous, considerate Somerset, you just heard me commemorate, never would you have tortured me by treatment such as this!”

“Cold-hearted, inhuman girl!” cried he, colouring with resentment, and instantly releasing her, “What a reproach was that! Was it thus you answered Delmington’s ardent protestations? Was it thus you upbraided, scorned, rejected *him*? No; you heard him with compassionating sensibility, wept over his romantic letters, defended him with zeal, and consoled him with kindness! This, all this you could do for a boy, a fool, who betrayed himself, and you, whilst I—I, who would sacrifice my life to obtain one smile, to gratify the slightest of your wishes—I, who love you even to distraction, am contemned, slighted, and disdained! Oh! Clarentine,” added he, passionately striking his forehead, and abruptly rising, “take care, take care you try me not too much!”

Clarentine now more alarmed than she had yet been, by the outrageous violence of this intemperate madman, afraid of betraying her resentment, and equally afraid of exasperating him by her silence, clasped her hands fervently together, and looking after him with a supplicating aspect, called out in an agony of distress—

“Mr. Eltham, for heaven’s sake, for mercy’s sake, leave me till you are more composed—leave me for to-night! You will kill me if you stay, and thus persevere in terrifying me so cruelly!”

Eltham, however, incapable of attending to, or of answering her, was walking with hurried steps about the room in an agitation of mind too great to be described. His countenance by turns expressive of fierceness, gloom, or disappointment, had lost all traces of that carelessness and good-humour, by which it was usually distinguished. Ashamed of himself, and angry with Clarentine, he knew not how to descend to the necessity of making an apology, with any grace; how to curb his own impetuosity, or how to attempt retrieving the confidence again thus wantonly forfeited.

Approaching her at length with rather more composure, his voice, however, yet betraying the strongest symptoms of emotion—

“I have gone,” cried he, “too far to recede; you *cannot*, a second time, sincerely pardon me; then why should I be so much my own enemy, as to renounce, from a chimerical notion of honour, a false principle of rectitude, which even *you* expect me not now to be guided by, the only chance of happiness I have yet in view, the happiness of confirming your dependence upon me, though I cannot secure your heart!”

“And would *that*,” cried Clarentine, darting at him an indignant and contemptuous glance, “would *that* make you happy?”

“Good God!” exclaimed he, “what a look was there!—Oh! speak to me again, dear Clarentine—soften to me the rigour of that reproachful glance, and I will do any thing, every thing you command! Say you forgive, and though you blame, also pity me, and the conflict shall be at an end, I will tear myself from you; for in your presence I can neither act uniformly right, or with impunity wrong!”

Clarentine, completely exhausted by the long contest she had sustained, pale, spiritless, and harassed, held out her hand almost mechanically, and leaning

her head upon the back of a chair, seemed equally averse either to speaking or looking at him.

He received the cold and passive hand she extended, with rapture, tempered by concern at the evident distress he had occasioned; and holding it between both his as he spoke, said in a tone of anxiety and tenderness—

“ My dear Miss Delmington, why this total, this solemn silence? Are you ill? Tell me, I beseech you!”

Clarentine shook her head, motioned with her hand for him to leave her, but still did not speak; and Eltham after remaining some minutes longer, irresolutely and fearfully gazing at her, upon her making another signal to him to go, reluctantly obeyed,

It was long ere Clarentine, humbled and depressed by this extraordinary scene, could conquer the agitation to which it had given rise, or recover any tolerable degree of serenity. The contrition and regret Eltham had evinced at his departure, led her, however, to hope she might escape the next day without further molestation; and calmed by this dependence, she sought as much as possible, before the return of Mrs. Newnham, to dissipate all remaining traces of chagrin and vexation.

In a very short time, that good woman appeared. Unsuspicious of what had passed, her questions, though numerous, were such as Clarentine found it easy to answer; who having staid with her whilst she supped, gladly consented the moment she had finished, to follow her to the room that was allotted her.

Having given orders to be called, by the earliest break of day, she arose the next morning, and pursued her journey.

Nothing remarkable occurred during the remainder of the way. Eltham appeared no more; and the travellers who now occupied the coach were of that non-descript order of beings, of whom little is thought, and neither good or bad can be said.

CHAPTER V.

AT the Inn in London where the stage put up, Mr. Lenham himself was waiting to receive and welcome his expected guest.

The mild, placid, and venerable aspect of that excellent man, prepared Clarentine, the instant she beheld him, to reverence and love him as a father. He addressed her with such soothing kindness, and regarded her with such unaffected benevolence, that she could almost have wept her thanks for a cordiality so cheering, and so consolatory.

When the first hurry of a meeting, which to Clarentine at least had been so unexpected, was over, Mr. Lenham, who had kept a hackney-coach in waiting, proposed having it called up, and attending her in it to Hampstead. To this she readily consented ; and after taking a friendly leave of Mrs. Newnham, whose daughter resided in that neighbourhood, she cheerfully followed her reverend conductor.

Their conversation, during the ride, turned chiefly upon the subject of Somerset's sudden death, and the unexpected arrival of his son. The first of these was an event, which, although he affected not deeply to lament, Mr. Lenham acknowledged he had been extremely surprised at, having, but a short time before, seen Mr. Somerset in town in perfect health and unusual good spirits.

"Had he lived, my dear young lady," added the worthy man, "till you were become an inhabitant of my house, I have great reason to believe you would have found in him a zealous and sincere friend. His heart with regard to you seemed totally changed ; and the kindness with which he repeatedly spoke of you filled me with the most cheering expectations."

"But to what, dear Sir," said Clarentine, extremely surprised, "could such a change be owing? Many

years have elapsed since he last saw me, and he can scarcely have heard me mentioned since his son's departure."

"We all, my young friend," replied Mr. Lenham, "require something to love, some one on whom to bestow that place in our hearts, which the absence of those we most fondly cherish has left vacant and unoccupied. Such," continued he, "was the case with your deceased uncle. He never approved his son's choice of a profession which so wholly counteracted his own views, and so long removed him from his sight; and, till lately, spent every interval between that son's departure and his return, in solitude and repining. By degrees, however, this cheerless retirement became irksome to him; he came oftener to town; mixed more in society; and as the species of misanthropy he had indulged wore off, looked round with anxiety for some object on whom, in his declining days, he could bestow his affection, and rest his hopes of domestic comfort. At that time *you*, Miss Delmington, were brought to his remembrance. I announced to him your intended removal to town; and from the very instant he heard of it, he seemed to be revolving in his own mind the means of obtaining in you that companion he had elsewhere so vainly sought."

Clarentine, as much affected as she was astonished at this account, could not but sincerely regret, that at the very time he seemed most favourably disposed towards her, she should thus have been deprived of a relation, whom it would have given her such unspeakable satisfaction to have known, to have loved, and to have been permitted to attend. She reproached herself severely for every harsh expression she might ever have uttered concerning him; and forgetting his long neglect, to think only of his intended kindness, sunk, in her gratitude for what was *designed*, the remembrance of what had been *omitted*.

Whilst these reflections still occupied her mind, and filled it with the truest concern, the carriage stopped at Mr. Lenham's gate, and the coachman having rung, a maid servant ran out with a candle in her hand to light them into the house. Clarentine's heart failed her as the moment drew near that was destined to introduce her to the strangers she was henceforward to reside with; and lingering purposely as she crossed the little court before the door, she stopped at the bottom of the steps, and said with a half smile—

"It is very foolish, but indeed, Mr. Lenham, I am almost afraid of venturing farther."

Mr. Lenham laughed at her apprehensions, yet with great kindness said—

"Shall I go in first then, and announce your arrival?"

Glad of any reprieve, she eagerly accepted the proposal, and struggling to gain courage during his absence, was able when he returned to accompany him into the room with tolerable composure.

The party to which she was now presented, consisted of Mrs. Barclay, the actual superintendant of the house, her daughter, a neighbouring lady of the name of Denbigh, and a very fine boy of about fourteen, a pupil of Mr. Lenham's, and the eldest of the three he had then under his care.

The usual formalities attending a first introduction being over, Clarentine, when they were all seated, ventured to cast a timid eye around her, and to take a more minute survey, than on her immediate entrance she had dared hazard, of the several individuals before her.

The first who by any singularity distinguished herself, was Miss Barclay. This young lady, who seemed to be about five-and-twenty, and unhappily for her had some pretensions to beauty, though not of the most feminine kind, looked at once vulgar, blunt and familiar. To a complexion naturally *florid* ra-

ther than *brilliant*, she added a pair of large black eyes, which in attempting to render expressive, she had made fierce, and in trying to give archness to, had utterly deprived of all diffidence or softness. Her dress, the laborious result of indefatigable pains and trouble, was, at least as far as she knew how to make it so, fashionable even to extravagance: and betrayed such a total want of taste, and an affectation of negligence so evidently studied, that, to Clarentine, who, novice as she was, had never before beheld so extraordinary a figure, she appeared more like a monstrous caricature, intended to excite ridicule and surprise, than any other thing she could compare her to.

With regard to her mother, Mrs. Barclay, little in respect to her exterior, at least, could be said. Her face was uncommonly plain indeed, but there was nothing strikingly remarkable either in her person or dress. Confined during the greatest part of her life to the country, and compelled whilst there, from the slender circumstances of her deceased husband, to undergo all the rural drudgery of a farmer's wife, she had neither had time, or inclination, to attend to the forms of cultivated society—to enjoy a rational conversation—or to participate in the pleasures of domestic tranquillity. Her mind, when at home, had regularly been in one continual *economical ferment*; when abroad, casting all care behind her, she thought only of indemnifying herself, by *jollity* and *frolic*, for the time she had lost, and the fatiguing round of household occupations to which, at other seasons, she had been obliged to submit. Her long seclusion from the world had contracted her ideas; given a species of boisterous roughness to her language and manners; and initiated her into all that idle love of gossip, so usual in a remote village, where the chief recreation of the inhabitants consists in an evening ramble from one neighbour to another, to enquire into the scandalous anecdotes of the day, comment upon, and exaggerate every circumstance as it is related.

Mrs. Denbigh, their visitor, was a quiet, grave, elderly woman, very simple in her manners, and extremely well-bred in her conversation. Clarentine, however, notwithstanding the apparent gentleness which seemed to characterise her, fancied she could discern in the cast of her eyes a latent propensity to satire, which made her shrink from their investigation, and innocent as was her heart, dread becoming the object of their penetrating scrutiny.

The youth, whose name was Blandford, was the son of a wealthy East Indian. He had been in England about four years, and on his first arrival had been put into a public school; from whence, however, choosing shortly afterwards to run away, he had since been placed by his friends under the care of his present tutor; with whom he had now lived near four years in perfect discipline and order.

Such was the party which Clarentine, on her arrival, found assembled. Revived, and comforted by the attentive kindness of Mr. Lenham—amused by the novel appearance of Miss Barclay—and rejoiced once more to find herself in a place of security, she very soon forgot her fatigue, and insensibly assumed such an air of cheerfulness and serenity, that her friendly host beheld the change with delight, and felt more than ever disposed to interest himself in her fate—to love, and to protect her.

The lateness of the hour at which the fair traveller arrived naturally precluded all possibility of entering into any regular conversation before supper; and whilst they were yet at table, Mrs. Denbigh's servant being announced, in a few minutes she took leave, and the whole party shortly afterwards retired for the night.

The room that had been appropriated to Clarentine, though not very large, she found on waking the next morning, was light, cheerful, and airy. Its win-

dows looked into the garden ; beyond which, only separated from it by a sunk-fence, was a meadow, encircled by a gravel walk, and securely sheltered, as well from observation as from cold, by a high and impenetrable hedge. At the back of this room was a large closet, with a bow window that reached the floor, and opened like a folding door into an old fashioned balcony, supported by the same pillars that formed a sort of portico before the entrance of the house.

In this closet, which had a fire place, and a door, in addition to the one that separated it from her bed room, which led into the passage, Clarentine, looking round her with delight, anticipated the many happy hours she should spend, when having placed her drawing materials and her books in order, she might wish to escape either from the bustle or restraint which visitors impose.

Whilst yet indulging herself in forming plans such as these, she heard somebody enter the next room, and turning round, beheld Miss Barclay—

“ Well,” cried that young lady, seating herself as she spoke, and drawing the dressing glass to the side of the table to reform some error in the set of her cap, “ how did you sleep ?—I’m dying for my breakfast—a’n’t you ?”

Clarentine, a little surprised at this easy *debut*, smiled, and said—“ I have scarcely had time to think of it yet ; I am but just dressed.”

“ O, nor I neither : but then, you know, when one has been worried up so, it’s horrid to be kept waiting. I dare say, however, my uncle won’t be ready this half hour, for he’s packing up such a load of things !”

“ Packing up ! where is he going then ?”

“ Lord, don’t you know ? A letter came here this morning, before any of us were awake, from some of the people who were present at the opening of Mr. Somerset’s will, to say my uncle must go down there

directly, for it was found he had been appointed one of the executors, and no business could go on without him."

"I am afraid then," said Clarentine, "we shall not see him again for some time. Will he breakfast with us?"

"O, yes—it's on his account the breakfast is so delayed."

"Then pray," resumed Clarentine, "let us go down: I should wish to see all I can of him before he sets out."

"Lord," said Miss Barclay, indolently rising, and still lingering before the glass, "one would think he was your lover, by the anxiety you express about him."

"I hope," said Clarentine, moving towards the door, "to find him a *friend*, and that perhaps may be *better* than a *lover*."

"I am sure," cried Miss Barclay—"I should not think so!"

And with these words, she followed Clarentine out, and leaving the room door wide open, brushed past her upon the stairs, and ran forward to see if her uncle was come down.

This mixture in the manners of her new companion of the rudeness of an unformed romp, and the freedom of a pert coquette, at once astonished and offended Clarentine so much, that she determined henceforward, however civil and acquiescent she might be when they met below, to discourage, as well by the coldness of her looks, as the whole tenor of her behaviour, the forwardness that led her thus to intrude into her private apartment.

"And this," thought she, "as much for her own sake as mine, since I greatly fear, I shall never have philosophy sufficient to endure her continually in my sight without being sometimes in danger of affronting her."

At the parlour door, she was met by Mr. Lenham—

“My dear young lady,” said he, taking her hand, “Lucy has probably acquainted you with the hasty summons I have received. It hurts me, so immediately upon your arrival, to be under the necessity of leaving home: but the business I go upon is of a nature, I trust, to plead with you my excuse.”

“O, Sir,” said Clarentine, “if in addition to the thousand other cares that must occupy your mind at such a moment, you were to suffer yourself to be disturbed by one thought relative to *me*, I should be inconsolable. All I have to wish is, that your absence may be short, and that you may return to us in health and spirits.”

“Thank you, my young friend,” said he—“the wish is like the speaker—benevolent and kind.”

Mrs. Barclay, at that moment entering the room, put an end to the subject, and Mr. Lenham perceiving the chaise already at the door, begged to have the breakfast hastened as much as possible, and the moment it was over rose to depart.

When he was gone, the parlour door was shut, and Mrs. Barclay, who had been in an enormous bustle the whole morning, was seated—

“Well,” cried she, “the day’s our own; we have nobody to stay at home for, or to consult; so let’s agree where we shall go to-night—What say you, Miss Clary,” addressing Clarentine, “to the play?”

Clarentine stared at this unexpected question, and said, she was afraid, after the death of so near a relation, it would be very improper for her to appear out of mourning; and at present, she had nothing black to wear—

“Pshaw!” exclaimed Miss Barclay, “What’s that signify? Nobody will know you!”

“Very true;” replied Clarentine, mildly, “but would there not be a want of decency in making the experiment?”

"Lord, well—you can send out for a yard or two of black ribbon to put upon your hat : and that, with a white gown, will be quite mourning sufficient, I'm sure. You don't wish to look like a widow !"

"No," said Clarentine, "neither, to be very sincere with you, do I wish to go out at all."

"And in return, to be equally sincere with *you*," said Miss Barclay, forcing a smile, "I fancy, Lady-Fair, you have been a good deal accustomed to have your own way ; hav'n't you ?"

"No," answered Clarentine, "I have not indeed : and to the prejudice of another, sorry should I be if I ever had. As this is a matter, however, which intirely concerns myself, and it would give me great uneasiness were my determination to influence yours, suffer me, this once, to be guided by my own feelings, and forbear to press the subject further."

"Oh, certainly ! Only you will excuse my saying, I think you rather *odd* !"

"Perhaps," returned Clarentine, good humouredly, "I might be tempted to say the same of *you*, if I knew how to put such an observation into very civil language."

To this, Miss Barclay, not comprehending, perhaps, the full extent of her meaning, made no reply, and Clarentine, soon after, went up stairs to write letters, and unpack her trunks.

These occupations, quick and diligent as she was, employed her till near dinner time, when, at her own door, just as she was going down to beg one of the servants might be sent to the post with her letters, she was met by Miss Barclay, out of breath with speed, who hastily called out—

"Lord, my dear creature ! there's one of the most fashionable, handsome young men below, enquiring for you, I ever saw in my life !"

"For me ?" cried Clarentine, "and pray what is his name ?"

"Indeed," replied her imperfect, but enraptured informant, "I can't tell, for the maid blundered it out so, it was impossible to understand her; however, he came on horseback, and upon one of the finest spirited animals you ever beheld. Do pray come down."

So saying she flew back herself, leaving Clarentine fully persuaded that this dazzling equestrian could be no other than Eltham in person. The conviction, however, gave her no sort of eagerness to make her appearance; but on the contrary, (had she been assured, that by delay she could have driven him from the house without seeing him) would have induced her most undoubtedly to have remained where she was till summoned down to dinner; but this she feared it was hopeless, with such a man as Eltham, to expect; and dreading his becoming too well acquainted with the family, lest he should be perpetually at the door, she only stopped to deliver her letters to the maid, and then, however unwillingly, directed her steps towards the parlour.

As she entered, and saw that it was indeed Eltham who waited for her, the recollection of all that had passed at their late meeting recurring most forcibly to her mind, dyed her cheeks with crimson, and utterly bereft her of either power or inclination to speak.

Not so the intrepid Eltham. Conscious he might feel, it is true, but far from betraying it, he addressed her with the same unembarrassed gaiety he would have done during the first period of their intimacy at Sidmouth; rallied her upon her gravity, and protested the air of London, short as had been her residence in its vicinity, had began already to exert its baleful influence over her.

"Lord, how should it be otherwise?" cried Miss Barclay; "She has been shut up all day in her own room—won't go any where even of an evening—and seems determined to mope herself to death!"

"Alas! my dear madam," cried Eltham, in a tone of affected commiseration, "you will find her, I fear, a very untractable creature! I wish you well through it; but as for *me* I would not undertake the management of her for the world! I never could gain any one point with her in my life!"

"Try, however," resumed Miss Barclay, "we want her to go to the play to-night, and because she has not got all her mourning ready for an old uncle whom she hardly ever saw, she declares she can't. Now, do you think, Sir, that in a play-house, all among strangers, this could at all signify?"

"Certainly not," answered Eltham, gravely, "certainly not; but as I told you before, she is utterly untractable, and therefore I believe it would be best not to contend with her!"

"Well, for my part," said Miss Barclay, shrugging her shoulders, and looking reproachfully towards Clarentine, "I would not be of so uncomplying a temper for the world!"

"Oh no!" cried Eltham: "With every other privilege that beauty can give, be nobler than your sex, and never, never, dear madam, exert your power with the degree of inflexibility your proud friend has shewn."

"As for that matter," cried Mrs. Barclay, who since Clarentine's entrance had hitherto sat silent, "I don't know whether it's her beauty that has made her so or not, but Lucy can sometimes be stubborn and proud as well as her neighbours."

"Lord, mama, what a speech!" exclaimed Miss Lucy, reddening—

"A mistaken one, I am persuaded," resumed Eltham; "softness, and complacency are painted in Miss Barclay's eyes; every look speaks tenderness, every motion proclaims—"

"Lord, what rattle!" interrupted Miss Barclay, turning away with an air of consciousness, but at the

same time with a laugh, that shewed her by no means offended. "I never heard any body talk so in my life."

Whilst this agreeable conversation, or rather dialogue, was passing, the maid, unchecked by Mrs. Barclay, who was by no means accustomed to observe the formality of retarding so necessary a business till her visitors were gone, had very leisurely been laying the cloth, and preparing every thing for dinner, which she now informed them was ready, and desired to know whether she might bring up? "Oh yes," said her mistress, "call the boys in, and bring it up directly."

Eltham, upon this, directing a very droll look at Clarentine, immediately arose, took a respectful leave of the whole party, and left the house.

"I protest," cried Miss Barclay, who the moment he was gone had flown to the window to see him mount his horse, "it was the rudest thing to let him go just as dinner was coming up, without asking him to stay, that ever was done."

"Rude or not rude," returned her mother, very composedly taking her seat at table, "I could not invite him to eat hashed mutton with us, and to-day we have nothing better."

"Well, I hope he'll come again, however!—But now I think of it," turning to Clarentine, "pray what is his name?"

"Eltham," answered Clarentine.

"Eltham!" repeated Miss Barclay with an air of mingled surprise and significancy, "*that's* Mr. Eltham, is it? Oh, I have heard of him."

"Why, what have you heard," cried her mother, "who is he?"

"He's nephew to Lord Welwyn, and an old acquaintance of Mrs. Hertford's, who has written to me a great deal about him."

"What, I suppose," cried Mrs. Barclay, laughing, "he's one of Mrs. Hertford's flirts?"

"Oh, no indeed," resumed the daughter, with quickness, "he's flirting just now with quite a different person."

This speech, which it was impossible Clarentine should misunderstand, more especially as, at the moment it was uttered, Miss Barclay glanced her eyes towards her with an expressive smile, provoked her extremely; but fearing to bring on a long conversation upon the subject, she thought it best to let it pass, and went on quietly with her dinner.

As soon as they rose from table, the play scheme having been entirely given up, they all walked out into the garden; where Clarentine, much pleased with the ingenuousness and good-humour of young Blandford, who attached himself closely to her the whole way, and appeared to feel irresistibly drawn towards her by the sweetness of her countenance, and the gentleness of her manners, remained conversing with him long after the two ladies went back to the house, and where she would gladly have remained yet longer, but for the summons that called her in to tea.

Being determined not to give offence by betraying an over-anxious solicitude to withdraw herself from society, Clarentine, as soon as candles were ordered, brought down her work, and established herself in the parlour for the rest of the evening.

This little proof of *condescension*, as Mrs. Barclay, whose expressions were seldom exactly suited to the importance or insignificance of the subjects she talked upon, termed it, seemed very much to soften that lady's heart in her favour, and to inspire her with a sentiment of infinitely more cordiality and kindness towards her than she had yet felt.

Clarentine sincerely rejoiced to perceive this change, and already disposed, rough and unpolished as she was, extremely to prefer the mother to the daughter, did every thing in her power still more to

increase this growing partiality. She read to her, on finding she was distressed for a new maid, every advertisement relative to servants, that the daily papers of the last week contained ; heard all she had to say concerning the difficulty of procuring domestics that could be depended upon, with the most exemplary patience ; agreed with her in lamenting the dearness of provisions ; and in short, so completely entered into all her family afflictions, that though she nearly talked herself to sleep, she securely established herself, as she had reason to hope, in Mrs. Barclay's good graces.

Meanwhile, Miss Lucy, appearing to think this conversation infinitely beneath her, and fully persuaded Clarentine had engaged in it solely for her own amusement, had, for nobler entertainment, recourse to a book of little opera songs, which she had some time before bought at the play-house door. These she sat negligently turning over, and humming to herself the whole evening ; never, except it was to fix her eyes upon Clarentine with a look of contemptuous pity or sarcastic surprise, desisting from her employment a moment.

With whatever solicitude she might affect not to perceive these airs, it will easily be supposed, that, industriously as they were persevered in for near three hours, Clarentine could not fail to observe them. The only effect, however, they had upon her mind, was that of leading her sincerely to compassionate her mother—a mother who, unentertaining and uncultivated as she might be, it was still evident possessed many qualities that rendered her deserving of a better daughter.



